# POLITICAL FRONTS OF TERRORIST GROUPS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL FRONTS, THEIR EVOLUTION, ROLES AND POTENTIAL FOR ATTAINING POLITICAL CHANGE

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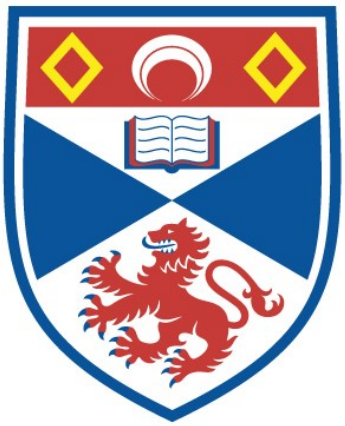

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# Political Fronts of Terrorist Groups: a comparative study of Northern Ireland political fronts, their evolution, roles and potential for attaining political change

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July 25th 2003

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# Abstract

This thesis outlines the evolution and roles of the political fronts in Northern Ireland and their potential for attaining political change. It will assess the impact of a number of selected 'variables', both 'internal' and 'external', on the utility (or lack of utility) of these fronts. The variables that have been selected for consideration are: 1) Ideology, structure and leadership, 2) The notion of violence as a habit, 3) Popular support, 4) State response and 5) Other factors and events in the External Environment. Alexander George's 'structured, focused, comparison' methodology will be employed and the selected cases are the Irish Republican Army, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force. Although all of the 'variables' have had a significant impact the thesis argues that the greatest motivation behind the use of Sinn Fein has been the desire to mobilise or tap perceived existing support. In the case of the loyalist political fronts the domestic external environment, specifically the perception that the loyalist working classes had been manipulated by 'respectable' unionist politicians, was the most important factor behind their greater use. Paradoxically, it is unionist culture (such as its 'law abiding' nature and division of labour ethos) that has presented the most significant obstacle to their utility.

The thesis will then assess whether or not political fronts represent moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the groups. It will suggest that they have in the loyalist cases. Although the following argues that political fronts are very much part of the 'terrorist machinery' as the political voices and propaganda outlets for terrorist groups, and that it is a misconception to view them as the 'moderate half' of a movement, the thesis will contend that Sinn Fein has also ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence. The conclusion will then suggest that the selected variables be tested in other examples and, assuming that Sinn Fein has come to represent moderation towards the use of violence, will then attempt to draw some lessons from the case of the IRA and its political front that might be considered when studying other cases.

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# Glossary

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| AIA | Anglo-Irish Agreement |
| DUP | Democratic Unionist Party |
| CIRA | Continuity Irish Republican Army |
| CLMC | Combined Loyalist Military Command |
| EIA | Basque Revolutionary Party |
| ETA | Basque Fatherland and Liberty |
| GAC | General Army Convention (IRA) |
| GFA | Good Friday Agreement |
| GHQ | General Headquarters (IRA) |
| HASI | Revolutionary Socialist People's Party |
| ICA | Irish Citizens Army |
| IPP | Irish Parliamentary Party |
| IRA | Irish Republican Army |
| IRB | Irish Republican Brotherhood |
| LAW | Loyalist Association of Workers |
| LVF | Loyalist Volunteer Force |
| MLA | Member of the Legislative Assembly |
| NICRA | Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association |
| NUPRG | New Ulster Political Research Group |
| OIRA | Official Irish Republican Army |
| PIRA | Provisional Irish Republican Army |
| PSNI | Police Service of Northern Ireland |
| PUP | Progressive Unionist Party |
| RHC | Red Hand Commandos |
| RHD | Red Hand Defenders |
| RIRA | Real Irish Republican Army |
| RUC | Royal Ulster Constabulary |
| SDLP | Social and Democratic Labour Party |
| SF | Sinn Fein |
| UCAG | Ulster Community Action Group |
| UCDC | Ulster Constitution Defence Committee |
| UDA | Ulster Defence Association |
| UDF | Ulster Defence Force |
| UDP | Ulster Democratic Party |
| UFF | Ulster Freedom Fighters |
| ULDP | Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party |
| UPRG | Ulster Political Research Group |
| UPV | Ulster Protestant Volunteers |
| UUP | Ulster Unionist Party |
| UUUC | United Ulster Unionist Coalition |
| UVF | Ulster Volunteer Force |
| UWC | Ulster Workers' Council |
| VPP | Volunteer Political Party |

# Contents

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

Terrorism has the power to adversely affect peace processes, disrupt societies and hamper policy implementation. From the 1970s it has become a global phenomenon and, as most conflicts today take place within states rather than between them[1], it is imperative that we should study those sub-state groups engaged in violence in order to understand the international system itself. The events of September 11th 2001 has made such research more important than it has ever been.

For the purposes of this thesis terrorism is defined as

> 'the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.'[2]

Terrorism in general has been an understudied area of international relations and it is perhaps therefore not surprising that there are some areas within the topic that have yet to be studied in detail. While there are a number of excellent general publications on terrorism as well as on particular groups and their strategies, one area of study that

[1] Jongman, A., and Schmid, A., 'Contemporary Conflicts and Human Rights Violations, 1998', Terrorism and Political Violence, Autumn 1999, Vol. 11, No. 3.

has been neglected is the phenomena of terrorist 'political fronts'. This thesis attempts to tackle the question as to why it is that some terrorist organisations utilise political fronts, and to examine their roles and potential for attaining political change, using Northern Ireland examples of both republican and loyalist fronts.

There have, as far as the writer is aware, been no works published on this specific topic. Leonard Weinberg and William Eubank have written on a similar subject in reverse – describing the evolution of terrorist groups from political parties. They suggest that in these cases 'organizational or propaganda' means for radicals to argue their case either do not work or 'at least not at the pace the radicals hope to achieve'.[3] This thesis argues that political 'fronts' can be used when the opposite realisation occurs, in other words when victory is not envisaged in the short term through the use of violence alone (for example the IRA's 'Long War' strategy of the 1970s). Although Weinberg and Eubank address different types of linkage between terrorist organisations and political parties they do not set out to explain the use of 'political fronts'.

As outlined in the methodology below this thesis is primarily concerned with cases in Northern Ireland – the Irish Republican Army, the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force. There have been a number of works written on the evolution of Sinn Fein within the Irish republican movement but none has specifically scrutinised the utility of Sinn Fein as a 'front'. Less emphasis on a political strategy does not necessarily mean that a political front loses its utility. Sinn Fein, for example, has had functions that are less 'political' than others, such as 'community policing'

[2] Wardlaw, G., Political Terrorism, Cambridge: The University Press Of Cambridge, 1982, p. 16.

and its propaganda role. In sum, a role for the political front is not necessarily synonymous with more emphasis on a political strategy.

A review of the literature of the Northern Ireland conflict shows that, although it is profuse, again there is little attention given to the role of political fronts. There are a number of excellent books that document the history of the IRA, (most notably by Bowyer Bell, Tim Pat Coogan, Bishop and Mallie, and M.L.R. Smith), and of the history of the conflict generally. Conor Cruise O'Brien's *States Of Ireland* and Richard Rose's *Government Without Consensus* provide authoritative accounts of the decades leading up to the outbreak of the 'Troubles'. There has also been a proliferation of books that cover the period from the early 1970s, again both analysing the conflict and more specifically the growth of loyalist and republican paramilitary groups. None of them address in detail the role or the reasons for the existence of the political front – although Henry Patterson's *The Politics of Illusion, A Political History Of The IRA* does shed some light on the phenomena studied here by assessing the impact of the resurgence of republican socialism in the 1930s on republican strategy and how it generated greater political involvement, either through 'conventional' electoral participation or grass roots agitation.

There are, however, works that describe in detail the rise of Sinn Fein as a player from the late 1970s[4] – this *is* clearly of key interest to this thesis. It is possible that a political front may well be used as an avenue to a more political approach on the part

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[3] Weinberg, L., and Eubank W., 'Political Parties and the Formation of Terrorist Groups', Terrorism and Political Violence, Summer 1990, Vol. 2, No. 2, p.126.

[4] By, for example, Brendan O'Brien (The Long War, The IRA And Sinn Fein, O'Brien Press, Dublin, 1995), Peter Taylor (Provos, The IRA And Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997), Liam Clarke (Broadening the Battlefield, The H Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Fein, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1987)

of a 'movement' or indeed as the ultimate means to embrace democracy and leave violence behind. Brendan O'Brien has paid particular attention to the growing prominence of Sinn Fein in *The Long War*. Patterson's book also examines the political front's increased role, describing republican strategy in the late 1970s as the 'rediscovery of social republicanism,' heralding an elevated role for the political front.[5] Taylor in *Provos* also assesses the political front's role from 1977. These authors have, however, in the main described Sinn Fein's increased prominence through its role in the republican movement's evolving political strategy without outlining some of the other roles of Sinn Fein, such as its function as a propaganda tool, or in vigilante justice, or in the orchestration of street violence.

Less studied have been the loyalist groups, with the notable exception of Steve Bruce, who documents the origins of the UDA's and the UVF's political fronts and reveals the very different reasons for, and problems with, the prospects of these groups using such fronts.[6] Adrian Guelke and Jim Smyth have sought to explain why loyalists and republicans entered the electoral process in the early 1980s. Although the use of political fronts by loyalists does appear to be more synonymous with engagement with the electoral process[7], in general such endeavours form only one of the potential functions of a political front.

It would be useful to draw up a model of what characterises such 'fronts' as distinct from conventional political parties. Comparisons could be made with far right

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Jack Holland (Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict), Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999), Ed Moloney (A Secret History of the IRA, Penguin, 2002).

[5] Patterson, H., The Politics Of Illusion, A Political History Of The IRA, Serif, London, 1997, p.180.

[6] Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992.

political parties such as the 'post-fascist' Alleanza Nationale in Italy or the German NPD (National Democratic Party). Weinberg states that 'some definitions of 'political party' restrict its meaning to organizations which accept the legitimacy of the prevailing order or ones that operate in national contexts where an atmosphere supportive of pluralism exists.'[8] Clearly 'parties' like Sinn Fein would not meet these criteria. The literature on political parties does not locate *political fronts* in any model of political parties, though they are sometimes inaccurately described as members of Duverger's 'militia party' group (see chapter 3).[9] The Chambers dictionary describes the word 'front' as 'the face, appearance; ... the side presented to view'.[10] For the purposes of this thesis terrorist political fronts are defined as organisations that provide a public face and a political voice for terrorist groups and are characterised by the dual membership that exists between the two.

This project will focus on why some terrorist groups utilise political fronts and others do not. Thus, while it is not directly concerned with conflict resolution or peace processes per se (which others have addressed), it does set out to achieve an improved understanding of the strategies of such groups. This will not only provide a useful contribution to social scientific knowledge, with developments in causal analysis in particular, but it is also believed that opportunities for conflict resolution between governments and violent sub-state actors will ultimately be enhanced by a better understanding of such groups and their strategies.

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[7] As borne out in Guelke, A., and Smyth, J., 'The Ballot Bomb: Terrorism And The Electoral Process In Northern Ireland', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 4, No. 2, (Summer, 1992), pp. 103-124.
[8] Op. cit. Weinberg and Eubank p.128.
[9] Such as in Hague R., Harrop M., and Breslin S., Comparative Government And Politics, Macmillan, Basingstoke and London, 1992, p. 238.
[10] Chambers Giant Paperback Dictionary, Harrap, Edinburgh, 1998.

This is not to say, of course, that this work has no relevance to conflict resolution. For example, the possibility that a political front might be utilised as a sign of moderation towards the use of violence is also assessed, and the factors that lead to this may also be those that help facilitate resolution and a peace process. It will be argued, however, that there are also other potentially significant factors behind the adoption of the 'conventional' political route on the part of a terrorist group, all of which will be of particular interest, not just to liberal democratic governments and national policy makers, but to a variety of policy communities such as non-governmental organisations, the United Nations and the European Community.

The aim of this thesis is to make its own modest contribution to theory formulation by assessing the impact of a number of 'key' variables on a terrorist group's decision to utilise a political front and/or participate (or not) in 'conventional' politics. It is through the assessment of these 'variables' that the different roles and utilities of the political front will be outlined. Whilst it does not set out to construct an over-arching general theory, its conclusions can contribute to hypothesis building through subsequent analysis of further case studies. The following will attempt to address why some terrorist groups engage in 'above ground' politics more than others, or indeed why the same group enters the political process on some occasions but not others. The objective is to understand the extent to which a more 'political route' emerges because of the perceived failure of terrorism, or the belief that terrorism has served its purpose. Are political fronts, for example, created with the ultimate objective of abandoning violence? Alternatively, are they formed to launch a dual-track strategy that re-emphasises the primary role of violence? Or do some insurgent groups resist the 'political route' because of the perceived success of terrorism, where violence alone is viewed as having great utility? The possibility, however, that political fronts can be

utilised in other ways that do not necessarily entail engagement with 'politics' (abstentionist or not), such as vigilantism or 'community policing', should not be overlooked. Moreover, political fronts very much form part of the terrorist machinery as the 'political voice' or the propaganda tool of terrorist groups.

There are a variety of methodologies that could be employed to explore the above research questions.[11] The statistical method entails the 'conceptual (mathematical) manipulation of empirically observed data ... in order to discover controlled relationships among variables'[12]. Its advantage is that because it deals with a large number of cases it is useful as a hypothesis generating approach. However, whilst this thesis will focus on key variables, which the statistical method is able to do, the uniqueness of each case should not be compromised by what Sartori refers to as 'conceptual stretching', or 'conceptual straining ....to vague, amorphous conceptualizations' so that 'our gains in extensional coverage tend to be matched by losses in connotive precision'[13]. He adds that '...the more we climb toward high-flown universals', (which the statistical method purports to be able to do), 'the more tenuous the link with the empirical evidence.'[14] More significantly, the 'controlled variables' that will be employed that make the cases worthy of comparison will restrict the number of cases actually available for study, which further discredits the statistical approach as the appropriate method for this thesis.

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[11] 'Methodology', to use Sartori's definition, I use to refer to 'a concern with the logical structure and procedure of scientific enquiry' (G. Sartori, 'Concept Misformation In Comparative Politics', The American Political Science Review, Vol. LXIV, No. 4, p. 1033.)

[12] Lipjhart, A.,'Comparative Politics And The Comparative Method', American Political Science Review, September 1971, Vol. 65, No. 3, p. 684.

[13] Op. cit. Sartori p. 1034.

[14] Ibid. p. 1035.

The strength of the case study method is that attention can be paid to every detail in order to understand the use of a political front on the part of a terrorist group, without any need to focus on 'key variables'. However, by virtue of the fact that one cannot make any generalisations from just the one case, this, too is not the most appropriate methodology available for what this thesis sets out to achieve.

Some form of comparative analysis, by nature of the fact that it focuses on more than one case, contributes more to hypothesis formulation and theory building. Whilst the smaller number of cases and potentially large number of variables (or concepts) would still restrict this thesis' capacity to generate typologies it nevertheless aims to make a contribution to theory formulation that can be expanded upon by subsequent analyses of further cases. Two of the ways that Arend Lipjhart suggests to minimise the problem of too many variables and too few cases are to look at cases longitudinally, by, for example, focusing on, say, two different time periods of the same terrorist group, thereby increasing the number of cases, and secondly by ensuring that they are 'comparable'. That is 'similar in a large number of important characteristics (variables) which one wants to treat as constants, but dissimilar as far as those variables are concerned which one wants to relate to each other'.[15] The latter allows us to establish 'relationships among a few variables while many other variables are controlled', and thus alleviates the difficulty of too many variables.[16]

As intimated above, however, and notwithstanding these suggestions, the comparative case study approach does restrict the scope for making general hypotheses. 'Some loss of information and some simplification is inherent in generalisation and in any effort

[15] Op. cit. Lipjhart p. 687.
[16] Ibid.

at theory formulation',[17] but, as Stretton argues, 'comparison is strongest as a choosing and provoking, not a proving, device: a system for questioning not answering.'[18] Partial generalisations based on just a couple of cases, therefore, can provoke and develop further theory formulation when tested within a wider sample. As Alexander George points out, although history does not repeat itself, for each case possesses unique features, we could still classify different types of phenomena and come up with general laws.[19]

Indeed, having surmised that a comparative approach would most fit the research agenda, it is George's 'structured, focused comparison' method that will be adopted in this thesis - ('focused because it deals selectively with only certain aspects [or 'key' variables] of the historical case ... and structured because it employs general questions [or research questions] to guide the data collection and analysis in that historical case.'[20]) Whilst a positivist, scientific approach is useful for explanation and policy relevance there is also a need for contextual sensitivity and cultural understanding, unravelling the layers of meaning that might not mean much to positivists but do to the indigenous population. This more hermeneutic emphasis will help one to understand the cases 'inside out'. The advantage of the 'structured, focused comparison' is that it is a positivist method that also seeks to accommodate culture and 'local' conditions.

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[17] George, A., 'Case Studies And Theory Development: The Method Of Structured Focused Comparison', in Lauren, P., Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy, New York, Free Press, 1979, p. 47.
[18] Stretton H., quoted in Lipjhart, A., 'The Comparable-Cases Strategy In Comparative Research', Comparative Political Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2, July 1975, p. 160.
[19] Op. cit. George p. 45.
[20] Ibid. pp. 61-2

When assessing the impact of each of the key variables, a clear distinction should be made between a political front's political involvement that represents a more moderate approach on the part of the group and political engagement that does not. Whilst a more political route may indeed come about through a 'softening' of attitudes towards the use of violence, it might also develop as part of a strategy that re-emphasises its utility. Thus, two very different strategies might emerge (as a result of one or more of the following variables) that **both** involve conventional political participation. The 'key variables' or concepts within the internal and external environments that will be related in each case as potential causes for the presence or absence of the phenomenon in question are:

## The Internal Environment

1) Ideology, Structure, and Leadership

The ideology, structure and leadership of the groups will be assessed for their impact on strategy and on the utility of a political front.

2) The notion of violence as a habit.

The intention is to explore the difficulties, if any, that terrorists have in relinquishing violence and how this may have impacted on the utility of the political front. This will be viewed at both the group and individual level, where the notion of 'no going back' and the idea of a kind of family attachment with fellow insurgents will be investigated.

## The External Environment

3) Popular Support

Popular support for a terrorist group will be studied at both the structural level (where a state's jurisdiction may be perceived by a 'constituency' as illegitimate) and ad hoc, where its level may vary due to events in the environment, for its impact on the utility of a political front. As stated above, whilst a high level of popular support may inhibit political participation as a sign of moderation, it does not preclude the possibility of entering the political process as part of a dual-track strategy that actually re-emphasises the primary role of violence.

4) State Response

The state's response will be studied for its effects on the strategies of the case studies. Its reaction to terrorism can militate against or result in the greater use of a political front. The success of security operations against terrorists may force them to think more politically, ie. because of the perceived failure of terrorism as a tactic. Alternatively, if a government 'over-reacts' it can help a terrorist group prosper through an increase in popular support for violence (which might be seen as legitimate against 'government oppression'), and therefore lessen the chance for moderation and any political involvement that might represent such moderation. A group might, however, wish to tap the high level of popular support politically and may therefore

enter the political process as part of a dual-track strategy with the political front as the 'junior partner'.

5) Changes In The External Environment

The effects of changes in the indigenous political conditions on the strategies of terrorist groups will be assessed as will the impact of changes in the international strategic environment.

There is a considerable amount of overlap and interaction between these variables. For example, the kind of government response may determine the level of popular support for a group, which in turn may or may not prompt that group to re-evaluate its strategy. Thus, a combination of factors may result in strategies that involve a greater or lesser role for the political front which in turn may lead to engagement in (as a sign of moderation or otherwise), or absence from, the conventional political process.

Having outlined the methodology and the key variables the next step is the selection of case studies that fit the research 'problem'. For the purposes of this thesis these will be the two cases of the Irish Republican Army (1956-69 and 1970 onwards), the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force. As George argues, the cases must all be instances of the same class or universe, or in other words one 'must not mix apples, oranges and pears'[21]. The choice of Northern Ireland as the context for the cases provides the author with a number of crucial 'controls' for comparison. The close geographical proximity of the cases will, it is contended, reveal a 'cluster of

[21] Ibid. p. 55.

characteristics that areas tend to have in common and that can therefore be used as controls'[22].

This is not to say that there aren't any difficulties in choosing these particular cases. It is, for example, questionable as to whether the 'pro-state' terrorist groups (the UDA and the UVF) can be usefully compared to the anti-state terrorist group of the IRA. After all the 'pro-state' unionists have been securely in power since the partition of the island so it would seem less likely for the loyalist groups to enter conventional politics and compete with the major unionist parties that already represent their primary interest - that of the future security of Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom.[23] The IRA, it would appear, has had far more reason to engage in above ground politics since the group has set out to challenge the status quo and unionist dominance. Nevertheless, the contention here is that, although there are differences in the problems faced and strategies pursued by 'pro-state' groups and their 'anti-state' counterparts (and these will be outlined), it could be argued that the IRA, by adopting the 'political route', would, like the UDA and the UVF with the unionist parties, be competing with the constitutional nationalist party (the Social and Democratic Labour Party) that itself advocates the main raison d'être for the IRA (a united Ireland). In other words both the IRA and the loyalist groups have had constitutional alternatives for pursuing their diametrically opposite goals without having to establish or utilise their own 'political fronts' and this enhances their potential for comparability.

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[22] Op. cit. Lipjhart, 'Comparative Politics And The Comparative Method', p. 688.

[23] This thesis will argue, however, that it was precisely the disillusionment with unionist politicians that helped prompt the loyalist groups to establish political fronts.

A second problem with this particular choice of case studies is that they are not truly independent because the IRA and loyalist groups operate within the same region of a 'nation-state' and, because they are in direct opposition to one another (in a conflict that is often perceived as a 'zero sum' game), decisions taken by one side are inevitably going to be affected by the actions of the other.[24] Thus the three cases cannot be analysed in isolation from one another and this may undermine any attempt at generalisation. This admittedly could have been avoided by using two completely 'separate' cases.

It is true that a comparison with ETA (Basque Fatherland and Liberty), for example, and the IRA would have solved both of the above problems whilst retaining geographical proximity (ETA is also 'anti-state' and Spain is also a 'Western democracy'). This, however, would reduce the number of 'constant' variables but perhaps more significantly the massive transformation in the political conditions that democratisation in Spain brought about, which subsequently facilitated the creation of Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna's 'political fronts' – the EIA (the Basque Revolutionary Party) and HASI (The Revolutionary Socialist People's Party) - represented a unique indigenous political explosion that might on its own question the comparability of ETA with other cases, such as the IRA. In short are any two cases truly comparable?

Thus, to re-emphasise the advantages of using an 'intra-unit' rather than an 'inter-unit' comparison 'most of the scholars who have written about the comparative method insist that the study of sectors within a single nation offers the ideal setting for

[24] This is particularly the case with the loyalist groups whose strategies have often been regarded as a reaction to republican violence.

controlled comparisons '[25] whilst Eulau argues that 'if 'control' is the sine qua non of all scientific procedure, it would certainly seem easier to obtain in a single culture .... than across cultures.'[26] Besides, whilst the cases in the Northern Ireland context may not be entirely independent per se, this thesis does not set out to establish theories and hypotheses but merely seeks to contribute to them. To reiterate Stretton's argument, comparison is a system for provoking, not proving.

The 'controls' that the selection of these case studies enable us to use can be identified as the following:

a) The three groups are secular, as opposed to religious or apocalyptic, and therefore their tactics and strategies are geared towards secular, realisable goals. Thus, the objectives of the groups, it is argued, in theory at least, lead to more discriminate violence (ie. mainly targeting security force personnel, or opposing paramilitaries), unlike the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by apocalyptic groups such as the Japanese Aum sect.[27] This in turn accords secular terrorists more legitimacy and therefore facilitates the greater likelihood of political involvement. Thus, both case studies come from the same class of group, as opposed to, for example, the class of religious groups.

b) All the groups are sub-state (in other words, state terrorism is excluded from this thesis)

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[25] Smelser, N., cited in op. cit. Lijphart, 'The Comparable-Cases Strategy In Comparative Research', pp. 167-8.
[26] Eulau, H., quoted in op. cit. Lijphart, 'The Comparable-Cases Strategy In Comparative Research', p.168.

c) All the groups operate within a (Western) democratic environment.

d) All the groups operate primarily within the same geographical area (Northern Ireland) of the same nation-state (the United Kingdom) and therefore within a single culture and society.

e) All the groups have, to varying degrees and at different times, engaged in above ground politics.

f) All the groups are deeply involved in racketeering and organised crime as a means of raising funds.

g) All the groups actively engage in vigilante violence to control their 'own' communities.

Section One will begin with a brief historical narrative of events from 1956 (chapter 2) in order to provide the context for the subsequent chapters and the analysis of the selected variables. Chapter 3 will provide a typology of 'the political front' and argues that it represents a category of party in is own right in the broad spectrum of political parties.

Section Two will begin with an outline of the ideology, structure and leadership of the groups (chapter 4). The impact of these on the relationship between the groups and

[27] It should be noted, however, that the groups have also been involved in sectarian murders and general attacks on civilians in public places and so they have certainly been perceived as engaging in

their political fronts, and on the role of the latter will be assessed in chapter 5. It will be argued that the powerful ideology and centralised and disciplined structure of the IRA has facilitated the use of a political front whereas the less centralised and more fragmented nature of the UDA, for example, has been less amenable to their use. Chapter 6 explores the notion that violence, both for the individual and the group, can become habitual and studies the degree to which this might militate against or indeed facilitate the greater use of a political front.[28] It will also consider the extent to which the excitement, mystique and power of violence, along with its apparently addictive allure to its perpetrators, as well as the idea of a close knit family of interdependent conspirators, has prevented a more political approach. In general, it is argued that 'violence as a habit' has undermined the potential use or greater use of a political front.

Section 3 will begin by assessing the impact that popular support (or lack of it) has had on the utility of the political front (chapter 7). In the case of the IRA it will be argued that 'popular support' is the variable that has had the most significant impact in bringing about the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein. While there was at least a degree of localised support for the political front's 'community policing' function, it was the desire to mobilise support that led to the greater utility of Sinn Fein through the so called 'Long War' strategy in the 1970s and it was the desire to tap perceived existing support that lay behind the 'bullet and ballot box' strategy of the 1980s, when the political front's role was expanded to include its electoral function. Popular support has also been a significant factor behind the greater utilisation of the loyalist political

indiscriminate attacks by the victim community.

[28] In the post ceasefire period, for example, some 'Sinn Fein' activities (such as vigilantism) may have increased directly as a result of 'violence as a habit' from those 'activists' who want 'action' but are obliged to adhere to a ceasefire of terrorist violence.

fronts in that these fronts represented attempts to provide working class loyalists with political representation.

Chapter 8 will argue that the state's response has also been of fundamental importance in bringing about greater utility of the political front. Its successful response to the IRA by the mid 1970s prompted the group to rethink its strategy which in turn led to an expanded role for its political front. The British (and Irish Republic's) response to the conflict has also been essential in bringing about the greater utility of all three groups' political fronts through the peace process that emerged in the 1990s. Chapter 9 will identify other important factors (in the writer's view) that have impacted on the utility or otherwise of political fronts. In the case of the IRA these include the role of the United States, the Libyan-IRA connection, the emergence of the Social and Democratic Party, the loyalist response (early 1970s), the hunger strikes and Sinn Fein's potential electorate. In the case of the loyalist groups the most significant variable affecting the utility of its political fronts is the domestic external environment. It is argued that the 'law abiding' nature of Northern Irish Protestantism, the division of labour ethos that permeates unionism and the fact that they are pro-state groups have all presented powerful obstacles to the use of loyalist political fronts. Despite this, it was the disillusionment with 'respectable' unionism that led to the emergence of these fronts.

In conclusion, this thesis will summarise the impact of the variables studied and then address the following questions: to what extent has the greater utility of a political front come about due to the perceived failure of violence, and to what extent does greater utility represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence? As far as Sinn Fein is concerned the jury is still out on the second question, although it will be

argued that the political front, for many reasons, has ultimately come to represent moderation on the part of the movement. Finally, political fronts are not a phenomenon unique to Northern Ireland. The findings of this thesis will briefly be compared to other cases and will then consider, if Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence, the lessons that can be learnt from the Northern Ireland experience.

# Section 1

# Chapter 2 – The Emergence and Evolution of the Modern Political Fronts

Before proceeding to assess the impact of the selected variables on terrorist group strategy in the Northern Ireland context it is necessary to provide a brief narrative and some background regarding the events that took place throughout the duration of the period studied (1956 – 2003) and a brief outline of what strategies vis a vis the use of a political front were employed by the groups. This thesis will then focus on the reasons for the use of a political front in the four cases and the extent to which each of the variables assessed brought this about. This chapter will therefore focus on *what* happened rather than *why* it happened, although it will of necessity provide a certain degree of explanation that will be developed in subsequent chapters.

## The IRA 1956-69

Ever since the English confiscated and distributed Irish land to (mainly Scots Presbyterian) settlers 'the root-relation between Protestant and Catholic in Ireland [has been that of] one between settler and native.' [1] For centuries since Irish republicans have revolted against the British state culminating in the Anglo-Irish war of 1919. While Irish

republicans were determined to be rid of the British, the Protestants of Ulster were equally adamant (through, for example, the formation of the mass Ulster Volunteer Force) that they should retain their land and their link with Westminster. The peace agreement that saw Home Rule for Ireland therefore excluded six of the counties of Ulster. The Irish, however, were split over the deal and when the 'Anti-treatyites' were defeated at the polls the latter decided to resume the war against the British. The new Irish Free State government realised that their former comrades had to be crushed if they themselves were to survive, and so began the bitter and uncompromising civil war. The Anti-treatyite Irish Republican Army were eventually defeated but the group was to resurface as a terrorist organisation in the decades ahead, most notably through Sean Russell's bombing campaign of 1939 and the Border Campaign of 1956-62.

In 1949 the Army Council accepted the view that one of the reasons for the failure of its campaign of 1939 had been 'the failure to harness popular support' and that the IRA had been 'politically naïve'.[2] The upshot of this assessment was that the group needed some kind of political enterprise but it still did not want to have any dealings with the 'illegitimate' institutions of Leinster House and Stormont. Any political involvement or participation in elections would have to be strictly abstentionist. This was also the position of Sinn Fein. Therefore in the 1949 Army Convention, a resolution was passed 'allowing the IRA to infiltrate and control the Sinn Fein party so that the Army could have a political wing.... Thus the Army Council sent volunteers off to enlist in Sinn

[1] O'Brien C., States of Ireland, Hutchinson & Co. Anchor Press, London, 1972, pp. 71-2.
[2] Ibid. p. 247.

Fein'.[3] The party viewed this as a natural development and accepted the election of the IRA's Patrick McLogan as the new president in 1950. Henceforth the party formally became the political front of the IRA.

The IRA's Border Campaign or 'Operation Harvest' was launched on the 12th of December 1956. Its military objectives were laid out in the following statement:

> 'The mission of each force in these areas was to cut all communications, telephone, road and rail; destroy all petrol stations, and enemy vehicles found, his enemy strategic strongpoints where supplies could be found, or where administration of enemy could be disrupted ... Our mission is to maintain and strengthen our resistance centres throughout the occupied areas and also to break down the enemy's administration in the occupied area until he is forced to withdraw his forces. Our method of doing this is use of guerrilla warfare within the occupied area, and propaganda directed at inhabitants. In time, as we build our forces, we hope to be in a position to liberate large areas and tie these in with other liberated areas – that is areas where the enemy's writ no longer runs.'[4]

On the night of the 12th a series of raids against border posts and military installations was carried out. Ten different areas were attacked by approximately one hundred and fifty men.[5] The authorities, aware of the internal split in the IRA that they thought had

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Irish Times, January 18, 1957, quoted in Bowyer Bell, J., The Secret Army, The IRA 1916-1979, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1989, p. 283.
[5] See Coogan, T., The IRA, Fontana, London, 1987, pp. 384-7.

temporarily disabled the organisation, were caught by surprise. Nevertheless, a combination of internment without trial both in the North and in the South (after De Valera had come to power in March 1957) led to a series of arrests so that by the end of 1957 it was clear that the campaign had passed its peak. Earlier in the year Sinn Fein, which had been banned by Stormont in December 1956, had managed to poll 5% of the vote (66,000) in the election that returned De Valera to power but by 1961 this had dropped to 3%. In February 1962, having sputtered on long after it had been clear that the campaign had been a failure the IRA formally ended its campaign while Sinn Fein, as the political front for a strategy of violence, 'lay shattered on the far shore of Irish politics, without power or prospects, still a captive of the principle of abstentionism.'[6] The campaign had seen a total of 605 IRA incidents since 1956, leaving six policemen and ten insurgents dead.[7]

In September 1962 Cathal Goulding took over the leadership by which time many IRA men had discovered alternatives to a life of insurgency.[8] Under the influence of Roy Johnston Marxist ideology gradually became the new creed of the organisation. Non-sectarianism became a crucial principle and agitation over housing and jobs was stepped up. Though not universally felt, antipathy towards the use of violence accompanied the leftward drift of the organisation. Nevertheless, although at a Special Army Convention meeting in 1964 the delegates endorsed social as well as political revolution, the

[6] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 337.
[7] Ryder, C., The RUC, A Force Under Fire, Mandarin, London, 1982, p. 94.
[8] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 339.

leadership's proposal to end abstention from the parliaments in Leinster House, Westminster and Stormont was defeated.[9]

The debate over abstention did not end there, however. Under the continued Dublin leadership of Goulding the IRA pursued its leftward drift in opposition to the traditionalists. The group became increasingly active in agitation in the countryside at the same time as moving away from physical force.[10] In an unprecedented departure the IRA was becoming a devoted convert to Marxism where social revolution took priority over Irish unification.

While all these internal debates were taking place within the IRA in March 1963 Captain Terence O'Neill succeeded Lord Brookeborough as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. Much to the ire of hardline unionists he expressed his intention to introduce reforms to address sectarian tensions, thereby raising Catholic hopes at the same time as generating Protestant fears. In 1966 the Ulster Volunteer Force was created in response to 'O'Neillism' and the suspicions he had germinated in the Protestant community.[11] It was also apparently a response to the IRA[12], although at this time 'the IRA as a military force was virtually non-existent'[13]. Its political front was faring little better. Sinn Fein had been banned in 1964 followed in 1967 by the proscription of the 'newly organised Republican Clubs ... on the grounds that they were front organizations for Sinn Fein and illicit

[9] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie pp. 54-5.
[10] Op. cit. Coogan pp. 420-21.
[11] See Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, p.7.
[12] Wichert, S., Northern Ireland Since 1945, Longman, London and New York, 1991, p. 141.
[13] Taylor, P., Provos, The IRA and Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997, p. 21.

recruiters for the IRA.'[14] Meanwhile in the South the party put up a poor showing in the 1967 local elections.[15]

Hardline unionist pressure against O'Neill's attempts to accord Catholics equal civil rights meant that the minority community were to be disappointed, but the genie had been released. In 1967, at a time when civil rights movements were in vogue across the globe (particularly in the United States) the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed, initially over discrimination in housing allocation. NICRA was not a front for the IRA but Goulding wasted no time in infiltrating the movement, one estimate suggesting that thirty of the seventy delegates at the Association's first AGM were 'known republicans or IRA'.[16] The grievances highlighted by NICRA tied in with its own social agenda, although Goulding's was non-sectarian whilst the civil rights movement became more associated with Catholic grievances. To Ian Paisley and his followers NICRA was a camouflage for the IRA and as such it was subjected to vitriolic verbal abuse. Its marches in 1968 and '69 were met with angry loyalist resistance.

The environment that was to develop facilitated the ultimate reemergence of the IRA, albeit under a very different leadership. The in-built paranoia within the Protestant community from its historical 'siege mentality' was brought to the fore by the rantings of Paisley and his demonstrations against the 'Romeward trend' of the Presbyterian Church. He more than anyone else contributed to the polarization of the conflict and incited

[14] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 349.
[15] See ibid. p. 346.

loyalists to take up arms to counter this 'betrayal'. Paisley's UCDC (Ulster Constitution Defence Committee) and the Ulster Protestant Volunteers were formed to counter O'Neill's 'treachery'[17]. If Paisley was truly unaware of some of the subversive activities of the UPV, he was certainly responsible for using rhetoric so forceful that it led men to take up arms.

In the meantime (in 1968) the IRA decided, in line with its new ideological emphasis, to 'undertake direct military action in support of appropriate social causes. Operations were to be carried out that used the Army as an instrument of social justice.'[18] Whilst Goulding's ideology may not have been to the liking of some, this course of action was popular amongst those volunteers who wanted action and the resurgence of the physical force tradition. The operations, however, were limited to, for example, the destruction of a lobster boat in support of a fishing dispute and other activities associated with workers' rights, rather than a full blooded assault on the constitutional status of the province.

Meanwhile, loyalists, inspired by Paisleyite rhetoric, were determined to continue resisting NICRA marches, whilst the latter was determined to keep marching. Sectarian hatred escalated, culminating in an attack on the left wing People's Democracy civil rights march by Protestant ambushers at Burntollet Bridge, outside Londonderry, injuring at least thirteen marchers while the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) allegedly stood and

[16] Violence and Civil Disturbances in Northern Ireland In 1969. Report of Tribunal of Inquiry, Chairman the Hon. Mr. Justice Scarman, Vol. II (Appendices), HMSO, Cmd. 566, April 1972, p. 53, quoted in op. cit. Taylor p. 39.
[17] Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, pp. 35-6.
[18] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 350.

watched.[19] The police force's neutral credentials again seemed to be compromised in Catholic eyes when, following the Burntollet attack, some policemen apparently attacked shoppers in (London)Derry city centre and 'sang sectarian songs in Catholic areas into the early hours of the morning.'[20] The behaviour of loyalists and the security forces actually began to threaten the 'repudiation' of the state that they so sought to defend. Catholic faith in the justice system also plummeted following an inconclusive inquiry into the death of a forty two year old Catholic taxi driver, Samuel Devenney, from injuries received in an encounter with police in July 1969.[21]

In the same month members of the UPV and UVF set off explosions at an electricity installation and at water supply lines, for which they rightly anticipated the IRA would get the blame. O'Neill resigned on the 28th April later stating that the explosions 'literally blew me out of office.'[22] The loyalist strategy had worked.

On the streets defending Catholics in the North was not part of the IRA remit as far as Goulding and his cohorts in Dublin were concerned. The IRA's ideology now stressed the need for cross religion unity of the workers against oppression. To Goulding the real war was between classes, not religions. There was no room for a sectarian policy that would scupper the very thing they were trying to achieve – a unified working class – and so protecting Catholics against Protestants did not fit in with this analysis. The Dublin IRA leadership, therefore, from a safe distance, refused to respond to the alleged

[19] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 43.
[20] Purdie, B., Politics in the Street, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland, Blackstaff, Belfast, 1990, p. 215.

victimisation of Catholics in the North, despite desperate calls from their Northern counterparts for arms for protection.

The marching season that approached promised further sectarian strife. Rioting did indeed accompany the marches but it was the Apprentice Boys parade in (London)derry that marked a watershed in the conflict. Violence was sure to erupt in what was the last of the Summer marches. Some IRA men ignored their Dublin counterparts and set about establishing defensive barricades around the Bogside. Taunts between the Protestant marchers and Catholic residents escalated into full blown riots and what became known as the 'Battle of the Bogside'. After two days of mayhem the 'Bogsiders' stormed the RUC who reciprocated, followed by missile hurling Protestants.

More fuel was poured on the flames when a statement from Jack Lynch, the Taoiseach of the Republic in the South, made clear that the Republic could not stand idly by while innocent people were getting injured, and that the re-unification of Ireland was the 'only permanent solution'.[23] Such talk infuriated loyalists further and the prospect of an invasion from the South intensified sectarian hatred. To make matters worse the infamous B Specials[24] were deployed in Derry. Many Catholics felt defenceless against the loyalist 'pogroms' that burned the minority population out of their homes. Eventually, the RUC realised that the situation had gone beyond their control and asked the British government

[21] Bew, Paul, and Gillespie, G., Northern Ireland, A Chronology Of The Troubles, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, p. 17.
[22] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists, p. 61.
[23] Lynch, J., quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 50.
[24] The B Specials, which were part time members of the Ulster Special Constabulary (largely formed from the original UVF after the partition settlement), were viewed by many Catholics as nothing better than

to despatch the army. After three days of rioting, the army, in the shape of the Prince of Wales regiment stationed outside the city, was called in and relative order was restored.

Despite the brewing crisis in the North, Goulding believed that the time for revolution was not yet upon them. Whilst the issue of abstention was the main factor behind the IRA split in 1969 the sense of helplessness that the Northern volunteers felt after their Dublin leadership refused to assist with weapons was also a factor. Marxist ideology with its emphasis on mass mobilisation had generated calls for greater political involvement amongst the proponents of the new strategy which in turn led to the split over abstention, whilst the move away from the use of violence until such time the country was ready for revolution meant that arms for the Northern IRA brigades were not forthcoming, which led to the first rumours of a separate Northern Command from May 1969.

After the events of August 1969 and the apparent indifference of the Dublin IRA leadership, the Army Council was accused of letting its people down and abandoning the constituency it claimed to represent. They had been completely unprepared, with less than a dozen guns available for use, thanks to the Dublin leadership's 'obsession' with class politics.[25] It seemed that the only hope for the afflicted minority was the Republic's troops stationed on the border. The divisions within the IRA were to come to a head in its General Army Convention of December 1969. It was at this convention that the organisation eventually split over the principle of abstention. Sean MacStoifain became the Chief of Staff of the new 'provisional' IRA that broke away from the old IRA and the

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Protestant vigilantes. They were disbanded in 1970 after they were found to be 'biased and ill-disciplined' (Connolly, S. (ed.), The Oxford Companion To Irish History, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 562).

split was mirrored in Sinn Fein with the establishment of the 'provisional' Sinn Fein in January 1970.

## After The IRA Split

At the beginning of 1970 there was no apparent hostility between the British troops and the IRA but this was soon to change. On March 29th a Republican march commemorating the Easter Rising led to an assault on an RUC station in Londonderry, followed by riots. The following Monday loyalists attacked a republican march in Armagh. The violence intensified in the next few days as Catholics from the Ballymurphy estate attacked 'Junior' Orangemen marchers. Troops and army riot vehicles were despatched to the estate to restore order only to become targets themselves. The sight of loyalist rioters following army incursions into their estate led many Catholics to believe that the army was not a neutral force but another sectarian instrument of the Unionist province.

The marching season inevitably prompted further sectarian rioting and the more and more the Catholic minority felt vulnerable in the face of loyalist attacks with apparent security force acquiescence the more PIRA, who by now were better prepared, were seen by many Catholics as the defenders of their communities.

On 27th of June loyalists attacked the Short Strand Catholic community in Belfast while the army chose not to get involved. Whether this was because troop levels were

[25] Op. cit. O'Brien, p. 165.

insufficient or that they did not want to get caught in crossfire, as Peter Taylor suggests,[26] the crucial thing again was that the Catholic population's perception was that they were on their own and it was only the IRA that they could look to for defence. The loyalist assault and army's inaction, according to one PIRA member, 'added to the rebirth of the IRA and fitted in with the emergence of the IRA as a defensive force in nationalist Belfast.'[27] Malachi O'Doherty agrees that 'loyalist violence probably enhanced Catholic support for the IRA' and that 'republicans pointed to it as legitimising their need to defend Catholics.'[28]

The deaths of six civilians (five of them Protestant) over the weekend and the fears of a resurgent IRA led to another pivotal event in the conflict. The authorities sealed off the Lower Falls area of Belfast and placed it under military curfew while it proceeded to search the houses for weapons. The death of a resident after an army vehicle had accidentally reversed into him led to rioting and stone throwing against the army who responded with CS gas. Barricades were set up and the army endeavoured to remove them. The whole episode served to underline much of the Catholic population's feeling of alienation from the state. Kevin Kelley described what went on:

> 'Troops broke down doors with pick-axes and rifle butts. They ransacked homes, ripping up floorboards, tearing out fireplaces and smashing holes in walls and ceilings. Religious statues were broken and crucifixes pulled down, causing some

[26] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos, pp. 75-76.
[27] Gibney, J., quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 77.
[28] O'Doherty, M., The Trouble With Guns, Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA, Blackstaff, Belfast, 1998, p. 90.

residents to regard the British army as no different than the sectarian gangs who threw rocks through church windows. Five civilians were killed, about a dozen were wounded by British gunfire and more than 300 were arrested during the course of an incident that soon became known as 'the Rape of the Falls.''[29]

Worse still, hopelessly outdated intelligence not only led to a very small yield in terms of arms seizures but it also meant that a tiny proportion of those arrested were actively involved in the perpetration of violence. Those who believed that the IRA were gone for good after the failed campaign of 1956-62, and this included republicans[30], could not have foreseen the remarkable circumstances that would facilitate, even demand, the revival of the organisation, not as a covert group of conspirators that lacked popular support, but as a group perceived by many Catholics as the genuine defenders of the beleaguered minority population – and it was loyalist extremism coupled with security force ineptitude that had helped to bring about this resurgence.

In the Summer of 1970 the Social and Democratic Labour Party, founded by Gerry Fitt, John Hume and Austin Currie, emerged from the Civil Rights movement. It was committed to the unification of Ireland by peaceful means. Predictably Provisional Sinn Fein called on nationalists to boycott the new party. Meanwhile, in its Ard Fheis (annual conference) in October, which followed the PIRA General Army Convention of the previous month delegates were told that arrangements had been 'regularised' and that the 'provisional' label was to be dropped for both 'wings'.

[29] Kelley, K., The Longest War, Northern Ireland and the IRA, Zed Press, London, 1982, p.147.
[30] Such as Danny Morrison (see op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p.61).

It was the curfew of the Lower Falls in 1970 that many saw as the turning point in the 'Troubles'.[31] The local population, many of whom were previously unsympathetic to the group, were driven into the arms of the IRA and embraced its 'vision of the British army as an invader'.[32] In retaliation PIRA killed two RUC men in a car bomb in Crossmaglen in South Armagh. Such was the infancy of the revitalised movement that the command structure wasn't developed enough to sanction all of PIRA's operations as many 'Volunteers' acted independently and spontaneously.

The lull in violence towards the end of 1970, however, allowed the IRA time to develop its structure aswell as train recruits. By the end of the year the organisation had begun bombing economic targets and then in 1971 began to shoot soldiers and policemen. In February it claimed its first army victim – Gunner Robert Curtis, who was shot by the IRA's Billy Reid in the New Lodge area of Belfast – and set in motion a campaign that would increasingly challenge the ability of Stormont to control it. The ruthless assassination of three off duty Highland Fusiliers on 10th March 1971 led to demands from unionists for a tougher security policy and prompted the resignation of Prime Minister James Chichester-Clark. As the IRA murder campaign and sectarian riots escalated the loyalists increasingly felt that the security forces were failing to protect their communities. On 15 May 1971 representatives of a number of 'Defence Associations' met to form an umbrella organisation and it was out of this that the Ulster Defence Association emerged.

[31] For example 'Jonathan' (pseudonym), a 'young officer', quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 81.
[32] Op. cit. O'Doherty p. 86.

On 9th August 1971, as the situation deteriorated, Chichester Clark's successor, Brian Faulkner, introduced internment without trial. It was an unmitigated disaster. To begin with the IRA had been tipped off and in any case intelligence for the operation was dated. The army found very few of the suspects they were looking for. Significantly, unlike in the 1956-62 campaign, the measure was not reciprocated in the South, providing sanctuary for the suspects. Perhaps worst of all internment was aimed primarily at the Catholic population and laid the seeds for many to become involved with the IRA. By 12th August twenty two people had been killed[33], and allegations of torture by the security forces were rife, all helping to enhance popular support for the group. Merlyn Rees acknowledged the mayhem when he announced in 1975 that 300,000 pounds compensation had been paid 'for false arrest and for assault and battery in the cases of 473 people.'[34]

Internment, according to Kelley, had another effect – it led 'to a greater politicization of the Provisional movement'.[35] As prisoners accumulated at Long Kesh or Milligan political education became a priority for the internees and set in motion the internal process that would ultimately lead to Adams' and Bell's political searching, and the notion of the 'Long War'.

The constitutional SDLP's response to internment was to withdraw from Stormont, leaving the party out on a limb and the IRA as the sole representative of the Catholic

[33] Op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 37.
[34] Op. cit. Kelley, p. 155.

population, thus playing into the latter's hands. At this time Sinn Fein was very much in the background as the junior partner to PIRA but during the course of the past turbulent months they had been busy evolving a strategy for Ireland once the British had been driven out. The Ard Fheis of October 1971 endorsed the Eire Nua project, which advocated regional parliaments for each of the four ancient provinces of the country.[36]

In the meantime, in response to internment, the IRA's tactics became more sinister. A bomb ripped through the Four Step Inn on the Shankill Road, killing two Protestants and injuring twenty seven. Loyalists hit back in December 1971 with a devastating explosion that killed fifteen in the Catholic McGurk's bar. The IRA responded a week later with another bomb in the Shankill that killed four. The conflict was escalating and becoming more polarised with the security forces less and less in control.

Bloody Sunday, where the British parachute regiment shot dead fourteen apparently unarmed marchers,[37] was another pivotal event in the early days of the 'Troubles'. It had a 'profound' effect on Catholics and confirmed to many in the minority community that the army as well as the RUC were merely instruments of a sectarian state.[38] As a result popular support and recruits for the IRA increased dramatically as once again the organisation was seen as the last line of defence for besieged Catholics. Indeed, argues Bob Purdie, in his book outlining the origins of the civil rights movement, after Bloody Sunday 'the Provisionals became the leaders of opposition on the streets as well as the

[35] Ibid. p.157.
[36] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p.104.
[37] The Saville enquiry has been established to try and establish exactly what happened on Bloody Sunday.
[38] Op. cit. O'Doherty p. 87.

promoters of urban guerrilla warfare.'[39] 'Politics was a dirty word in those days'[40] as IRA violence intensified and the infamous car bomb made its debut on the 20th of March 1972, killing six in Donegal Street, Belfast.

On the 24th the deteriorating security situation prompted the British government to announce the suspension of Stormont and the imposition of direct rule from Westminster. Now that Stormont had been suspended there was a growing groundswell of Catholic opinion that wanted the IRA to call its campaign to a halt.[41] From a position of strength and given the mood of the Catholic population, the IRA called a truce and a delegation secretly met Secretary of State William Whitelaw. The subservient role of politics in republican thinking was evident in that there were no Sinn Fein representatives present. It was also evident in the politically naive demands that the IRA leadership were making - that the Brits should get out, regardless of the views of the majority population of the province. They saw the problem as the British presence, not so much unionist intransigence, and violence was the way to force a British withdrawal, and the more of it then the quicker Westminster's resolve would weaken. Victory was around the corner as far as the group was concerned and this intensive short term strategy of violence would do the trick. Whitelaw described the meeting with the IRA as 'a non-event.'[42]

In the meantime his 'Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals' published in March 1972 for the first time introduced an 'Irish dimension', forcing a split in unionism and the

[39] Op. cit. Purdie, p. 247.
[40] Martin Meehan, PIRA commander in Belfast's Ardoyne, quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p.135.
[41] Op. cit. Kelley p.172. Goulding's fears of an increasingly sectarian conflict led to the OIRA's ceasefire in May.

creation of William Craig's Vanguard Unionist Progressive Party, which was fully supported by the UDA. It represented Craig's efforts to unify unionists of all hues under one umbrella to show the IRA that it meant business. Although on the surface the organisation was apparently 'respectable' Craig's provocative speeches, talking of '[liquidating] the enemy'[43], like Paisley's rhetoric, prompted many young loyalists to take up arms. Whilst the abolition of Stormont was greeted with jubilation by republicans it was the signal for the UDA to play a more prominent role. Because they felt that the security forces were doing nothing about the IRA's no-go areas they began to set up barricades of their own. These were dismantled by the army but the sectarian killing of Catholics continued – thirty six in all in the first seven months of 1972. The killings were also a response to the secret talks between Whitelaw and the IRA.

Indeed, fears of a secret deal between the IRA and Westminster enhanced the loyalists' already traditionally entrenched paranoia. It was now the turn of the Ulster Defence Association to attract large numbers of recruits. More and more Catholics were intimidated and forced out of their homes. A stand off on Lenadoon Avenue, where the IRA attempted to rehouse displaced Catholics into empty homes, between the army and republicans eventually degenerated into rioting and gunfire - the ceasefire was over. Interestingly, Frank Steele, then a member of MI6, recalls that the unionists didn't want the ceasefire 'as they wanted the British army to go on knocking the hell out of the IRA' and 'the hard-line IRA didn't want it' either leading him to comment: 'I know this sounds

[42] Whitelaw, W., The Whitelaw Memoirs, Aurum Press, London, 1989, p. 100.
[43] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists, p.98.

a callous thing to say, but I don't think either community had suffered enough to want peace.'[44]

And violence returned with a vengeance on 'Bloody Friday' 21st July 1972 when the IRA planted twenty two bombs in Belfast, two of them killing nine people. According to Kelley, 'the provos had done irreparable damage to their cause – in Britain, abroad, and in their own communities.'[45] The British response was to send the army into the hitherto 'no go' Catholic ghetto areas of Belfast and (London)derry in an exercise called 'Operation Motorman'. Whitelaw also assured unionists that the constitutional position of Northern Ireland could only be altered with the majority of the province's consent. In the same year he introduced 'Diplock'[46] Courts – jury only trials to counter the threats made to jury members by republicans.

In the meantime a power struggle had been going on in the UDA that culminated in the emergence of Andy Tyrie as the leader of the organisation. Interestingly Tyrie's analysis wasn't far from Adams' ideas that he developed three years later in Long Kesh:

> 'I had put suggestions forward of how the organization should develop and how we should look at different facets other than purely defence. I felt we should look at a political future, a historical future, and social issues. We should look at every possible aspect if it was to remain as a defence organization.'[47]

[44] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p.147.
[45] Op. cit. Kelley, p. 184.
[46] Named after the judge who recommended 'jury only' trials.
[47] Tyler, A., quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 115.

Within the UDA hardline members such as John White formed the cutting edge - the Ulster Freedom Fighters - to streamline the military activities of an organisation that had already attracted over 30,000 members. The strategy of the UDA at this time was to kill Catholics in an endeavour to persuade the community to force the IRA to stop their campaign.

Between November 1972 and January 1973 the IRA was under severe pressure from the state's security forces, both North and South. By Christmas 1972 two hundred IRA members had apparently been arrested since 'Operation Motorman', whilst the Irish Gardai had '[struck] at both wings of the Republican movement', including the arrest of the IRA's Chief of Staff, Sean MacStiofain.[48] The string of arrests of key IRA figures had pushed the republicans into a corner and led to their decision to bomb London in March 1973. Arrests continued, however, throughout 1973 in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

On the 14th of October 1973 the Sunday News announced the establishment of the Ulster Loyalist Front which was to be the 'political voice' of the Ulster Volunteer Force.[49] A forty eight day ceasefire was called by the UVF 'to assist the Ulster Loyalist Front work for a political solution to the problems of Northern Ireland.'[50] The UVF also threw itself behind a campaign for reducing bus fares.[51] In the meantime Whitelaw managed to

[48] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 152.
[49] Op. cit. Garland p.23.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists pp.124-5.

persuade the UUP, the SDLP and the Alliance party to share power through what became known as the Sunningdale Agreement.[52] The Irish dimension, manifested in the Council of Ireland, however, was to many unionists out of the question. The February 1974 Westminster election saw a resounding victory for the anti-Sunningdale unionists through the UUUC (United Ulster Unionist Coalition), seriously undermining the new power sharing experiment. The UVF made their own statement against the accord – by taking their campaign south of the border and killing twenty two people using three car bombs placed in Dublin and Monaghan.[53]

The protest over any Dublin involvement in the province's affairs moved on to the streets culminating in what was to become a hugely significant event for its impact on the utility of loyalist political fronts - the Ulster Workers' Council strike. Glen Barr, increasingly recognised as the political spokesman for the UDA, was chairman of the strike committee. The strike was supported by both the UDA and the smaller UVF and was fronted by Craig and Paisley. Power was cut and, largely through UDA intimidation, the province gradually came to an economic standstill. To loyalists and anti-Sunningdale unionists the government had ignored the will of the people at the February election while Wilson's provocative speech labelling them as 'people who [spent] their lives sponging on Westminster and British democracy' only incensed them further.[54] On May 14th 1974 the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act (1973) (Amendment) Order, which legalised Sinn Fein and the UVF, was passed. It was meant to encourage them to

[52] Sunningdale was the location for the talks.
[53] Cusack, J., and McDonald H., UVF, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, pp.122-3.
[54] Cain website, UWC Strike - Text of broadcast made by Harold Wilson, 25 May 1974,website: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/uwc/docs/hw25574.htm .

become engaged with the political process, through the constitutional Convention but the UWC strike paralysed the province prompting Faulkner and the executive to resign on 28th May 1974.

The apparent 'conversion' of Spence (the former UVF leader), the legalisation of the UVF just before the UWC strike and the political vacuum left after the collapse of the executive, prompted the organisation to form a new 'political party', the Volunteer Political Party. The object was to 'get some political dialogue going' because 'people had become disenchanted with the political leadership they had been getting which was leading us nowhere' and, according to Spence, working class loyalists needed to be politicised.[55] But the termination of the UVF ceasefire reflected the fact that a new hardline leadership had taken control. The resumption of violence was followed by a humiliating defeat for Ken Gibson of the VPP in the general election of October 1974. The UVF promptly stated that 'the general public does not support the political involvement of the UVF' and therefore it was 'fruitless to promote the Volunteer Party as a party political machine.'[56]

From prison, Spence was dismayed at the ending of the ceasefire and that the UVF outside had ignored his advice. But in Long Kesh he was to have a profound influence on those that would one day be instrumental in providing the political cadre that would lead to the creation of the Progressive Unionist Party.[57] Without the experience in Long Kesh Taylor argues that it is unlikely that such a political cadre of David Ervine, Billy

[55] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists pp.138-9.
[56] Ibid. p.140.

Hutchinson, William Smith and Gusty Spence himself, who were all to play 'vital' roles up to the Good Friday Agreement, would have emerged.[58] Like republicans, many loyalists too had received a political education of sorts in prison.

The prospect of the Convention election had aroused a debate within the IRA as to whether to shift towards politics or not. But violence was to continue. After the IRA bombed pubs in Guildford and Birmingham killing twenty six people Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act on the 25th of November 1974. The Bill allowed for the detention without charge of suspects for up to seven days, and, if appropriate, expulsion from the UK.

The year 1975 was to be an important one in the history of the Troubles as, according to republicans themselves, it nearly brought the defeat of the IRA. Following contacts via the secret or back channel and negotiations with Protestant clergy the IRA called a two week ceasefire from the 22nd of December which was extended to the 16th January 1975. After four bombs exploded in London and one in Manchester on January 27th the same channel of communication led to the truce from the 9th of February 1975. The main reason for the ceasefire was that the group came to believe that the British were preparing to withdraw from Northern Ireland. Indeed, the government had apparently spoken of 'structures of disengagement'[59], leading the IRA to assume that it was ready to abandon the province, when in fact it subsequently came to mean merely troop withdrawals.

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[57] See Garland, R., Gusty Spence, Blackstaff, Belfast, 2001, pp.173-4.
[58] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 141.
[59] Though the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees denied any knowledge of the use of the term (Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 191). But in Bew and Gillespie's chronology (p.100) it is argued that Rees

As part of the terms of the truce, Sinn Fein incident centres were established to monitor the ceasefire 'and avoid the kind of confrontation that had brought the 1972 ceasefire to an end ... The centres were set up in Enniskillen, Armagh, Derry, Newry, Dungannon and Belfast. They were a watershed in the public perception of Sinn Fein, giving it a political standing in the nationalist community and, more importantly, a physical presence.'[60] Sinn Fein, though, still had an inferior status to the IRA.

The truce raised concerns from the SDLP that Sinn Fein would reap political rewards for the IRA's influence over the British government at its (the SDLP's) expense. Perhaps more seriously loyalists once again feared a British sell-out and as a result intensified their level of violence against the Catholic community. Most notorious of the loyalist murder gangs was the Shankill Butchers, a UVF 'platoon' that sometimes attacked their victims so brutally that they were no longer recognisable to their own families. Ostensibly, the loyalist killings were an attempt to provoke the IRA into breaking its ceasefire and hence derail any 'deal' it may have reached with the UK, which in fact they managed to do by September as sectarian tit for tat bombings began again. But the IRA was also disappointed with the response of the government to its ceasefire.

The truce was over and the Sinn Fein incident centres were closed by Rees in November. By the beginning of 1976 the back channel had dried up and tit for tat killings began to accelerate. While the IRA had been on ceasefire many of its grass roots members returned to their families and dropped their guard, as the organisation was being 'run

'admitted afterwards in a letter to the London Times in July 1983 that the cabinet sub-committee dealing with Ireland had 'seriously considered' withdrawal ...'

down', mirroring the Anglo-Irish war truce during which the IRA had lost its operational capacity. The future leadership of the group in prison regarded 'the 1975 truce as the time when the IRA came closest to defeat and suffered irreparable damage.'[61] The legacy of the ceasefire confirmed republicans' historical distrust of politicians, and most certainly British ones.

While republicans in jail reflected on the failure of the ceasefire it was in Long Kesh prison that the strategy of the 'Long War' was born. In early 1976 the IRA had actually considered calling off the campaign - 'we were short of money, short of arms and men were getting arrested.'[62] As the Troubles broke out IRA strategy was very much violence alone with Sinn Fein acting as the propaganda tool for its use. This approach persisted through until 1977 when the 'Long War' strategy advocated the widening of the struggle. The main problem for Gerry Adams was that 'the struggle had been limited to armed struggle. Once this stopped, the struggle stopped.'[63] His new approach was therefore to expand the struggle beyond the military to the economic, social and political fronts aswell through a process of 'active abstentionism' that entailed creating and running alternative structures to those of the state. He also argued that they should pursue this new strategy on a thirty-two county basis. The political front, however, was still very much the junior partner in the movement as a 'Staff Report' made clear: 'Sinn Fein should come under Army organizers at all levels'.[64]

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[60] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 186.
[61] Ibid. p. 197.
[62] McKee, 'Billy', quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p.201.
[63] Adams G., Before the Dawn, Mandarin, London 1997, p. 250.

At the same time as the new strategy was being developed the Northern Command was established to reflect the growing prominence of the Northern leaders. This wasn't the only change that took place in order to sustain the 'Long War' strategy and to counter the security force successes against the republican movement. The IRA also changed its structure from one of large brigades to a cellular one to counter the use of informers.

Adams was released in February 1977, shortly after which it is alleged he became the IRA's Chief of Staff.[65] By this time the IRA was being put under further pressure through the British policy of Ulsterisation, criminalisation and normalisation – a process involving the restoration of police primacy (taking the army out of the front line) and the removal of special category status.[66] Ironically, it was the dispute over the latter that would ultimately lead to a more political republican strategy.

In 1977 loyalists, once again fronted by Paisley and his DUP, attempted to repeat the workers strike of 1974 in protest at what they saw as inadequate measures against the IRA. This time it failed and for many loyalists it was the last time that they were willing to be 'used' by the DUP leader. Tyrie and John McMichael 'set up a political think tank – the New Ulster Political Research Group – to work out the organization's own policy as its members no longer had any faith in mainstream loyalist politicians'[67]. Glenn Barr was its chairman, John McMichael its secretary and Tyrie was on the Committee. They

[64] Quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.212.
[65] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.201, and Moloney, E., A Secret History of the IRA, Penguin, 2002, p. 513.
[66] Special category status had been conceded by William Whitelaw in 1972 after a hunger strike by inmate Billy McKee and included privileges such as prisoners wearing their own clothing and not having to do prison work.
[67] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p.162.

simultaneously established the Ulster Community Action Group (UCAG) to strengthen its position in the community.[68]

The outcome of the NUPRG was a paper called *Beyond the Religious Divide*, 'which advocated negotiated independence with a constitutional Bill of Rights as 'the only hope of achieving a united Northern Ireland.' It said there had to be a constitutional settlement that was 'acceptable to both sections' [of the community] and stressed that the idea 'is not the creation of a Protestant dominated state, nor is it the stepping stone to a united Ireland.'[69] The notion of an Independent Ireland never caught on for economic and political reasons but the document 'did mark the beginning of the UDA's political development that would flourish almost two decades later through its political front, the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), which was to play a vital role in the events that led up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement'.[70] In a local government election in January 1981 the NUPRG managed to secure a seat through Sammy Millar.

The UDA was not the only loyalist organisation that was seeking to make an impact in the political sphere. In April 1978 the Independent Unionist group, linked to the UVF, was established, emphasising social and economic issues. Due to the controversial 'Independent' in its title its name was changed to the Progressive Unionist Party in May 1979.

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[68] McAuley, J., 'Cuchullain and an RPG7: the ideology and politics of the Ulster Defence Association', in Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1991, p.54.
[69] *Beyond The Religious Divide*, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.
[70] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists, p. 162.

The year 1981 was to have a profound effect on the course of the 'Troubles'. When William Whitelaw gave IRA prisoners special category status in 1972 it set in motion a series of events that had a profound impact on republican strategy vis a vis the role of Sinn Fein. The process of 'criminalisation' revoked this status and prisoners began to demonstrate through the 'Dirty Protest'.[71] When the government refused to budge the prisoners raised the stakes and, after a failed hunger strike in 1980, and against the IRA's wishes (the group saw such exploits as a diversion from their efforts to concentrate on the struggle), Bobby Sands began a second strike on 1st March 1981, followed by other prisoners at staggered intervals.

As Sands was beginning his protest another event took place that was to facilitate the dramatic effect that he would have on IRA strategy. On the 5th March Frank Maguire, MP for Fermanagh-South Tyrone, died. After much cajoling and discussion Sands' name was put forward to fight the seat as an 'H-Block/Armagh' candidate.[72] His victory by nearly 1500 votes seemed to be evidence that the hunger strikes had radicalised the Catholic population[73] and it was to have a profound effect on republican strategy.

To the government it was a humanitarian vote, to the IRA it was vindication for their strategy of violence. With such an emphatic political result the stage was set for the IRA to conduct a dual-track strategy with politics playing a more prominent role. The Sands vote had been achieved during a period of sustained IRA violence and so, rather than

[71] When prisoners spread their excrement over their cell walls.
[72] Negotiations were taking place that would ensure that Sands' vote would not be diminished by a rival nationalist or SDLP candidate so that it was a two horse race: unionism or Sands.

using politics as an alternative to violence or as a sign of moderation, political engagement was very much to be part of a dual-track strategy that re-emphasised the use of violence, as apparently condoned by the Fermanagh-South Tyrone electorate. Nine more prisoners were nominated as candidates in the Irish Republic general election of June 11th, winning 40,000 votes between them and two seats in the Dail (from which Kieran Doherty and Paddy Agnew abstained). Thus, while the 'long war' and the hunger strikes were certainly crucial factors behind the IRA's political involvement in the 1980s the new strategy did not see politics as moderating the movement vis a vis the use of violence. After the death of Sands the party's Owen Carron repeated Sands' victory in Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

As Taylor argued:

> 'the real historical significance [of the hunger strikes] lies in the election of Bobby Sands and Owen Carron to Westminster. Their victories laid the foundation for the political base that Gerry Adams knew had to be built if the 'struggle' were to progress. Sinn Fein's electoral successes through the next two decades are the hunger strike's political legacy.'[74]

Henceforth the IRA was to pursue a dual-track strategy that persisted right up to the ceasefires of the 1990s.

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[73] O'Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 264.

During the early 1980s James Prior, who had succeeded Humphrey Atkins as Secretary of State in Northern Ireland in September 1981, set up elections for an assembly to take place on the 20th October 1982 as part of a process known as 'rolling devolution'. It was the first time Sinn Fein had contested elections since 1969 but they managed to win 10.1 % of the vote and 78 seats, while the SDLP canvassed 18.8 % of the vote. On March 22nd 1983 Sinn Fein contested a council election in the North for the first time in fifty years and won a seat on the Omagh District Council by-election (through Seamus Kerr).[75] On June 9th 1983 Gerry Adams was elected as MP for West Belfast, though, true to republican tradition, he did not take up his seat. In the same election his party won 13.4% of the vote against 17.9% for the SDLP. On the 13th November 1983 Adams succeeded the 'traditionalist' Ruairi O'Bradaigh as President of Sinn Fein – another pivotal event as far as the subsequent utility of the political front was concerned. The Brighton bomb in October 1984, however, which nearly succeeded in wiping out the British cabinet, served as a powerful reminder that violence was to remain central to the struggle.

The hunger strikes also had an indirect impact on the UDA's political thinkers. In June of that year it created the Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party to 'provide Loyalist political expression' but it was also 'a reaction to Sinn Fein's re-emergence as a political force during the H Block campaign and the hunger strikes.'[76] The creation of the ULDP also represented the demise of the influence of those who were associated with the NUPRG. John McMichael emerged as the political spokesman for the UDA, advocating a more

[74] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 252.
[75] See Bishop, P., 'A Gunman Cleans Up His Act', The Observer, April 17th 1983.
[76] McMichael, G., An Ulster Voice, Roberts Rinehart, Colorado, 1999, p.32.

limited form of independence.[77] His venture into electoral politics proved to be a disaster, however, gaining only 2% of the vote in the South Belfast Westminster by-election of February 1982. Subsequent electoral forays by the ULDP suffered a similar fate.

The British government was seriously concerned at the electoral advances of the IRA's political front and so sought to marginalise it by strengthening the constitutional SDLP. After a period of rapprochement between the London and Dublin governments[78] the result was the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. It recognised that there were two traditions in Northern Ireland and pledged to enhance cross-border cooperation, both of which were intended to boost constitutional nationalism. It also promised greater security cooperation between the two jurisdictions (something that Thatcher was particularly interested in).

The AIA appeared to have the desired affect. In the 1987 election the SDLP stretched its lead over Sinn Fein to nearly 10%[79] and Gerry Adams lost his seat. The state's response through the AIA had put pressure on Adams' political strategy from the militarists within the movement, especially when they were sitting on a stockpile of Libyan weapons. From the unionist point of view the Agreement was a disaster. To their horror the Anglo-Irish Conference that was part of the deal gave Southern Ministers a say in Northern affairs. A hundred thousand unionists protested outside Belfast City Hall, while loyalists attacked police and burnt some of them out of their homes.

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[77] See Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.233.

Paisley had already mobilised a new organisation called the 'Third Force' in protest at the government's rapprochement with Dublin and the perceived failure to deal with the IRA adequately, and in 1985 the 'Ulster Clubs' were formed in response to IRA violence and Sinn Fein's success in the district council elections when they won 59 seats.[80] Now the response to the AIA was the formation, in the Autumn of 1986, of Ulster Resistance, a 'citizens army' to defend Ulster. It was 'in effect', according to Taylor, a fusion of the Ulster Clubs and Paisley's Third Force.[81] John McMichael, the reputed head of the UFF, sat on the Ulster Clubs' executive and indeed attempted to procure arms from South Africa that were to be split between the UDA, the UVF and Ulster Resistance.[82]

In January 1987 the UDLP published its latest political initiative, *Common Sense*, which offered proportionality at every stage of government for Catholics[83] but the political exploits of the UDA were to end with the assassination of John McMichael in December 1987. Other serious difficulties confronted the organisation. Many of its leading members were associated with extortion and racketeering, a fact exposed by The Cook Report,[84] while McMichael's killing and Davey Payne's arrest with the UDA's share of Lebanese arms, aroused suspicion that an informer lay within their ranks. Andy Tyrie, the long time leader of the organisation, found that his own position had become weakened and, after

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[78] After what Garrett Fitzgerald termed was a period where relations had been 'little short of disastrous' following a rift over the Falklands war (Fitzgerald, G., All in A Life, Garrett Fitzgerald, An Autobiography, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p. 462).
[79] See op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 208.
[80] See op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 179.
[81] Ibid. p.185.
[82] Ibid. p.189.
[83] *Common Sense*, Linen Hall library, Belfast.
[84] The Cook Report, Central Television, Summer 1988.

he discovered a bomb under his car (believed to be planted by members of his own organisation), he resigned.

After the departure of Tyrie a collective form of leadership took over the UDA. This leadership was in turn replaced by a younger collective leadership after many of the former were arrested in relation to the Stevens enquiry into alleged collusion between the security forces and loyalist terrorists. The Stevens enquiries and such allegations have been a running sore for the security forces and the state. It is precisely these kinds of transgressions, real[85] and perceived, that have bolstered one of Sinn Fein's primary roles. The political front's function is to discredit the 'illegitimate' British state and its forces whenever possible and any departures from the use of democratic means by the state are sure to facilitate its propaganda function, both at home and abroad.

The new UDA leadership were graduates of the UDF (Ulster Defence Force) that Tyrie had set up within the organisation. They had been dissatisfied with the self-preservation instincts of the old leadership that had replaced Tyrie. Throughout the 1980s the group had built up a reputation for being a bunch of gangsters that were heavily engaged in racketeering and 'their political announcements were only cover for a reign of intimidation and terror.'[86] [87] The new leadership wanted to bring the group away from such a reputation.

[85] A twenty page summary from the latest Stevens enquiry revealed that there was collusion in the murders of solicitor Patrick Finucane and a Protestant student ('mistakenly targeted') by the name of Adam Lambert (Stevens Enquiry, Overview and Recommendations, April 17th 2003, from website: http://www.nuzhound.com )

While all this turmoil was going on within the UDA in October 1987 the Eksund vessel was seized with a substantial amount of arms destined for the IRA. The delivery had come from Libya and it transpired that several shipments of arms had already got through. Thus the IRA were fully equipped to carry on their terrorist campaign if they so chose to do.

There were, however, strains developing within the republican movement. Adams wanted to bring it further down the political path, the upshot being that Sinn Fein voted to end the policy of abstention from the Irish parliament in 1986 (and thereby ditch one of the central tenets of its ideology), despite opposition from hardliners. Although this step may have shown an element of political realism, a serious split developed between those from the South (for abstention) and those from the North (voting to end abstention). Ruairi O'Bradaigh left the party to form Republican Sinn Fein which was committed to abstentionism.[88]

Gerry Adams did not want to end the armed struggle but it had to be conducted in a way that would allow him to develop the political aspect of the cause. The Enniskillen bombing of November 1987, for example, was a huge embarrassment to Sinn Fein who could see what effects such 'mistakes' would have on their electoral fortunes.[89]

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[86] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p.207.
[87] This appears to be a situation where a loyalist political front could be used as a tactical device.
[88] The Continuity IRA was to become its terrorist partner.
[89] As people gathered for the Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen on the 8th November 1987 an IRA bomb exploded killing eleven and injuring sixty three, an event that lost much popular support for the IRA and Sinn Fein at home and abroad (see, for example, op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 210).

In May 1987 Sinn Fein published a document called *A Scenario For Peace*. It reflected a gradual realisation for the first time that the unionist majority in the North had to be accommodated, even if it still insisted that the British government set a date for withdrawal from the province. Indeed, after the Enniskillen bomb Adams said 'there is no military solution' and remarked that he was prepared 'to consider an alternative unarmed form of struggle to achieve Irish independence.'[90] Indeed it was from the time of Enniskillen that the Humes-Adams dialogue began in which Hume endeavoured to persuade Adams of the futility of the continuation of the armed struggle.

In the meantime, in October 1988, the British government imposed a broadcasting media ban on Sinn Fein voices and the voices of all terrorist groups. This proved to be effective in limiting the party's exposure. In the four months before the ban there were 471 enquiries for interviews whereas in the four months after there were only 110.[91] Sinn Fein admitted that the ban had a detrimental effect on their ability to communicate its message, particularly to the British population.[92] It also reflected the hardline approach towards the IRA and Sinn Fein that had hitherto prevailed but was to change at the beginning of the following decade.

In the 1990s a number of important developments took place that were to have a significant impact on IRA strategy and on the role of Sinn Fein. For the first time loyalist

[90] Quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.304.
[91] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 309.
[92] McKittrick, D., 'Sinn Fein concedes impact of TV ban', The Independent, October 19th, 1990.

paramilitaries were actually killing more republicans than vice versa[93] (in fact in 1992 the UDA was banned, reflecting the 'recognition that it no longer [had] serious ambitions beyond its military campaign.'[94]), while security force successes reflected the British ascendance in the intelligence war. Taylor suggests that:

> '[the] lethal attacks on both wings of the Republican Movement by the SAS and loyalist paramilitaries, as well as conventional attrition by the police and army through the courts, were no doubt an important contributory factor in the IRA's decision to call its ceasefire in 1994. The IRA had recognized that it could not win a purely military victory and the British had long since realized that they could not inflict a military defeat on the Provisionals.'[95]

There were other equally important developments that led to the republican and loyalist ceasefires of 1994, each of which were not only important in bringing about a peace process but also in leading to the greater utilisation of both the loyalist and republican political fronts. For the first time the British government, rather than dismissing the republican movement as terrorists with little support, began to acknowledge the electoral mandate of Sinn Fein and sought to include the republican movement in any settlement. Peter Brooke, the Northern Ireland Secretary, famously remarked in 1990 that the British had 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland.'[96]

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[93] See McKittrick, D., 'Loyalist killings blamed on Protestant alienation', The Independent, April 14th 1993 and Cusack, J., 'New militancy evident in loyalist killings', The Irish Times, September 19th 1991.
[94] Bruce, S., 'Unionist politicians frustrated UDA political role', The Irish Times, August 15th, 1992.
[95] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 311.

Patrick Mayhew took over from Peter Brooke in April 1992 and 'he, too, recognised that the only way to end the violence was to give every encouragement to those within the Republican Movement who wanted to lead the IRA away from 'armed struggle'.[97] In fact, according to Taylor, by 1993 the IRA were actually looking to bring the conflict to an end but with honour and without surrendering.[98] The replacement of Margaret Thatcher with the more pragmatic John Major improved the prospects for compromise, although the new Prime Minister did have to rely on unionist MPs to opt out of the social chapter of the Mastricht Treaty. In December 1993 the *Downing Street Declaration* reiterated Westminster's position that the British government had 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland'[99] while it also safeguarded the rights of the majority population of the North.

It wasn't just the change in the state's approach that facilitated greater utilisation of the IRA's political front. Another significant factor was the influence of the American administration. Its granting of a visa to Adams in 1994, much to the fury of the British government,[100] was an important factor behind the IRA's first ceasefire, and it marked the beginning of a massive effort by the United States under President Clinton to bring republicans in to a political process and convince the British government to engage with them. The kind of exposure that men like Adams and McGuinness received in the United States while the IRA was on ceasefire made it more difficult to return to 'war' and represented the culmination of Sinn Fein's role to internationalise the conflict.

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[96] Holland, Jack, Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999, p.236.
[97] Quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.330
[98] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.330.
[99] Op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p.282.

The IRA's ceasefire announcement of August 31st 1994 was reciprocated by the loyalist groups six weeks later. The organisation, however, ended it with the Docklands bomb in February 1996. This undermined Sinn Fein's political efforts but Adams and McGuinness blamed the British government, arguing that it had deliberately stalled negotiations. Taylor suggests that had the IRA not bombed Canary Wharf the organisation would probably have split.[101] On 20th July 1997, and with a Labour Prime Minister in office with a large majority that would not have to depend on unionist support,[102] the IRA renewed its ceasefire.

The May 1997 general election also returned Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to Westminster (although they refused to take their seats). At the same time Mitchel McLaughlin of Sinn Fein had apparently argued that the IRA could not overcome the military superiority of the British army.[103] Thus, the state's response and the acknowledgement that violence was not going to achieve what it set out to do forced the IRA to think more of politics as a sign of moderation and the means to carry on the struggle without violence. Public pressure too was a factor with 'the vast majority ... sickened' by the use of Patsy Gillespie as a human bomb.[104] The Catholic community had had enough. The revulsion at some of the IRA's actions served to strengthen the support for those republicans seeking a more political route. Increasing engagement with the peace process saw a further split away from the IRA with the formation of the Real IRA in 1997.

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[100] See Major, J., John Major, The Autobiography, Harper Collins, London, 1999, p. 456.
[101] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p.352.
[102] The Labour party has traditionally been more sympathetic to the Irish nationalist cause.
[103] See op. cit. Taylor, Provos, p. 314.

In Easter 1998 the Good Friday Agreement was signed. At the heart of the deal was that so long as the majority of the people of Northern Ireland wanted to retain the union with Westminster then the constitutional status of the province would remain unchanged. This was reflected in the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Republic's constitution that had until that time laid claim to the North. A British-Irish Council that included the Northern Ireland Assembly and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales (thus implying that Stormont's bond with Westminster was on a par with those of Edinburgh and Cardiff) was also established. In return a power sharing executive and assembly were set up that would include Sinn Fein in the (mistaken) unionist belief that decommissioning would shortly follow. A number of North-South implementation bodies were also set up to enhance cooperation in areas of common interest.[105]

It was vital that, if the Agreement was to survive, those groups who had used violence were kept on board and were involved in the new political dispensation. The political fronts of the IRA, the UDA and the UVF, therefore, gained in importance as channels for the groups to become engaged with democratic politics.

The accord, however, did not explicitly compel the IRA or the loyalist groups to disarm, leaving open the possibility that the political fronts could be utilised as tactical devices. Ever since the signing of the agreement the issue of decommissioning and alleged continuing IRA activity has dogged the peace process and, at the time of writing, has led to four suspensions of the new political dispensation. In the meantime, while the IRA

[104] Ibid. p.317.
[105] In areas such as agriculture, fisheries, transport, waterways and tourism.

remains armed, it has managed to negotiate through Sinn Fein the release of its prisoners, executive positions in government, office space and facilities in Westminster for its four MPs, and is currently negotiating an amnesty for 'on the run' prisoners and positions on the District Policing Partnerships if and when Sinn Fein joins the Policing Board. At the same time state sponsorship of the front in politics by the British, Irish and American governments have helped Sinn Fein poll an electoral mandate that has seen it eclipse the SDLP for the first time.

On the loyalist side the ceasefires and the 1998 Agreement saw the UDP and the PUP at their most prominent. Since the Agreement was signed, however, the loyalist groups have become increasingly disillusioned. The UDA dissolved its political front in November 2001, a month after John Reid, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, declared the organisation's ceasefire over. The group has since claimed, through the Ulster Political Research Group (its latest political front), that it has reinstated its ceasefire after a bitter feud that saw the eviction of West Belfast brigade leader Johnny Adair.

At the time of writing (June 2003) the new political dispensation is in a state of suspension after the Stormont spying scandal of October 2002.[106] The British and Irish governments continue to endeavour to reestablish the institutions but have delayed the Assembly elections (originally scheduled for May 1st) after the IRA refused to declare that it would cease all paramilitary activity.

[106] When Sinn Fein members were arrested for gathering material 'likely to be of use to terrorists'.

## Conclusion

There are numerous factors and events that need to be taken into account when explaining the emergence of the modern political fronts in Northern Ireland. In the case of the IRA it was the perceived failure in the use of violence following Russell's unsuccessful bombing campaign in the Second World War that prompted the IRA to adopt Sinn Fein as its political front in order to mobilise sympathy for its cause (see chapter 7). The front's electoral successes in the 1950s, however, were to be short-lived after the failure of the Border Campaign, largely due to an effective and simultaneous state response from both Westminster and Dublin (see chapter 8). The reevaluation of republican strategy entailed greater identification with the working classes and Marxist ideology, revitalising the tradition of republican socialism. As in the 1930s this in turn meant more emphasis on a political strategy, although this time Goulding's IRA argued against the retention of its long-held policy of abstention. This issue ultimately led to the 1969 split between the 'Provisionals' and the 'Officials' and represented the most serious rupture to date along the traditional faultline between the more political 'republican socialists' and the more nationalist militarists.

Terence O'Neill's reforms, the emergence of NICRA, the loyalist response to it, and an ill-judged state response to the evolving crisis, all served to provide a polarized environment in the early 1970s that militated against the utility of political fronts. The security force successes and the near defeat of the IRA through the 1975 truce, however,

prompted the emerging new leadership to widen the struggle to all fronts and so Sinn Fein's role was expanded accordingly through a process of 'active abstentionism'. Indeed, it was the new leadership of Adams and McGuinness that was to be instrumental in providing new and innovative roles for Sinn Fein in the changing environment of the decades ahead.

There is no accounting for unforeseen events for their impact on strategy and Sands' by-election victory certainly represented a watershed in the republican approach vis a vis the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein (see chapter 9). Finally, the peace process, the ceasefires and the negotiations leading up to and beyond the Good Friday Agreement have accorded Sinn Fein an unprecedented role. Whether or not the political front has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence, the aspiration of the United States, the Irish Republic and the United Kingdom of drawing the republican movement into an all-inclusive peace process, even without firm evidence that its armed struggle was over, has endowed Sinn Fein with a strong negotiating position to reap concessions for the IRA and the Catholic community as a whole, and this has been a fundamental factor behind the party's electoral success.

Nevertheless, the new republican political strategy of the 1980s was to lead to tensions within the IRA. Traditionally, the fault line within republicanism had been between those that espoused Marxist ideology (and therefore sought to mobilise popular support through political endeavours) and those who had no time for politics but believed that the armed struggle was the sole means for achieving national unification. In the 1980s the new fault

line lay between those that wanted to hold on to the sacred principle of abstention and those that wanted to take advantage of Sinn Fein's electoral success by abandoning the principle in relation to taking up seats in the Irish Dail. This division led to the split of 1986 and the formation of the Continuity IRA. In the 1990s unrest within grew over the republican movement's increasing engagement with the peace process that led to the breakaway in 1997 of what was to become the Real IRA. Ever since internal tensions have remained over the IRA's involvement with a process that has entailed unwelcome sacrifices, such as the acceptance of the principle of consent and two acts of 'putting weapons beyond use', not to mention the increasing engagement with British political structures.

If the hunger strikes and Sands' victory were pivotal in enhancing Sinn Fein's role, then the one event that was to provide an impetus for the creation of loyalist political fronts was the Ulster Workers' Council strike of 1974. Loyalist workers had managed to bring the province to a standstill giving them a new found confidence that led to the perception of some within the loyalist groups that they could provide working class loyalism with better and more 'honest' representation than they had been getting from 'respectable' unionist politicians (see chapter 9). As with Sinn Fein, however, it was the peace process that was to give the loyalist political fronts (the PUP and the UDP) an unprecedented role as the spokespersons for the UDA and UVF, whose continued ceasefires were so vital to political progress.

As important as the endogenous factors have been, the impact of exogenous factors should not be overlooked. The influence of the United States has been noted above while the growth of the European Union and supranational politics helped foster a growing warmth in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, where territorial nationalism and boundaries have become less relevant. This in turn has led to greater cooperation between the two states in bringing about a settlement that enhanced the role of the political fronts. The growth of the European Union has been just one aspect of the process of globalisation that has deemed frontiers and nationalism less relevant in the Western world. The global communications revolution and a global economy that have increasingly transcended national boundaries has meant that Northern Ireland would miss out on the economic benefits of the new order if its two communities clung on to its 'traditional' territorial nationalism and its parochial past.

# Chapter 3 - The Political Front – A Typology

This chapter will attempt to construct a typology of terrorist political fronts. Political fronts are subordinate to their terrorist organisations and dual membership between the two is a common feature. As most political fronts can be described as political parties in the broad (non-democratic) sense it sets out to place them in Maurice Duverger's classification of political parties but finds that they do not adequately fit the two most likely models – the 'militia party' and the 'permanent minority party'. The militia party is a fascist creation and describes a party that is in control of its militia whereas the political front is subordinate to the terrorist group. The permanent minority party type describes a party that could resort to the use of violence rather than a terrorist group that might utilise a political front. It is then argued that the phenomenae of political fronts are usually (though by no means always) associated with secular terrorist groups – that is secessionist or nationalist - or groups that have a prominent secular component. This is primarily because there is a potential ethnic or ethno-religious community (such as the Catholics in Northern Ireland, or the Basques in Northern Spain) from which to mobilise support.

In the writer's view the term 'political wing' is an unsatisfactory label for the phenomena in question. A political front is a 'front' for and under the control of the terrorist group and it is only when this ceases to be the case that a new label is required. The term 'political wing' is often used interchangeably with political front but because it implies a

degree of equivalence with the terrorist group (assuming that the two wings of a bird are the same size) in terms of decision-making and overall influence in the direction of a movement, it ignores the fact that political fronts are usually subordinate to the terrorist organisation. It is also, therefore, usually the case that they emerge from the terrorist group, such as the Progressive Unionist Party from the Ulster Volunteer Force or the Ulster Democratic Party from the Ulster Defence Association[1]. In Spain in 1974 the Basque Revolutionary Party (EIA) and the Popular Unity Party (HB) sprung from ETA (pm) and ETA (m) respectively.

A political front is not the same as an internal 'political section' of a group. Nor should it be confused with the plethora of other fronts, support structures and sympathetic 'charities'.[2] While political fronts may also be engaged in similar propaganda and fundraising activities, the key distinctive feature is that they are umbilically linked to the terrorist group. This is evident in the cross or dual membership that exists between them, the former being the 'public face' of the movement. Examples include the IRA and Sinn Fein, the Real IRA and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, ETA and Batasuna[3] and the Corsican National Liberation Front and A Cuncolta Naziunalista.

[1] Exceptions include the case of Sinn Fein, which was taken over and adopted as the IRA's political front in the late 1940s and the case of the Irish Republican Socialist Party which was created simultaneously with the Irish National Liberation Army in 1974.

[2] Such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee and Friends of Sinn Fein in North America. Also the Italian Red Brigades, for example, did not have a political front but it did have a number of other 'fronts', including a 'mass front' to coordinate contacts with factory workers (see, for example, Jamieson, A., 'Entry, Discipline and Exit in the Italian Red Brigades', Terrorism and Political Violence, Spring 1990, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 5).

[3] Though ETA's political front uses the electoral banner of Euskal Herritarrok ( 'ETA political wing revamps after Basque ballot', Reuters, June 24th 2001).

Perhaps one of the most common misperceptions of all is that a political front represents the 'moderate half' of a movement. It does not follow that an active member of a political front has more moderate views towards the use of violence than those involved in perpetrating it (in fact they could be the same person). Nor is it necessarily the case that those in the front are any less radical in terms of policy than those involved in the perpetration of violence. In fact the opposite may be the case. Ruairi O' Bradaigh defected from Sinn Fein in 1986 in protest at the mainstream republican movement's abandonment of the policy of abstention from the Irish Dail.

Although there are exceptions[4], most political fronts claim to be political parties. If one were to employ a broad definition of political parties that was to include those operating in non-democratic aswell as democratic societies then undoubtedly the claim is justified, for in the non-democratic context

> 'instead of a body intended for the winning of votes, for grouping the representatives, and for maintaining contact between them and their electors, the political party becomes an instrument of agitation, of propaganda, of discipline, and, if necessary, of clandestine action, for which elections and parliamentary debates are only one of several means of action, and a secondary means at that.'[5]

As most political fronts can be classified as political parties in this broader (non-democratic) sense it would seem worthwhile to try and place them within the different

[4] Exceptions include Republican Sinn Fein and the 32 County Sovereignty Movement who describe themselves as political 'organisations'.
[5] Duverger, M., Political Parties, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, p.36.

party types established by one of the leading authorities on the subject, Maurice Duverger, in his classic work *Political Parties*.

In another archetypal work, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, M. Ostrogorski outlines the origin of political parties. It was, he argued, 'the revolution in the domain of ideas reinforced by the effects of the industrial transformation' that led to a spirit of enterprise and individual effort which in turn led to the middle class demanding a place in society.[6] Henceforth, legislation from 1826-46 in the United Kingdom, most notably the 1832 Reform Act, extended the franchise and so 'the monopoly of parliamentary representation was thus taken out of the hands of the aristocracy.'[7] It was this momentum that was to ultimately facilitate greater democracy and the emergence of the political party. There appears to be a general consensus[8] that the emergence of political parties was 'bound up with that of democracy, that is to say with the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogatives.'[9] John Lees and Richard Kimber agree that 'the growth of a more democratic political process helped further to legitimize, and make necessary, political parties as electoral organizations.'[10]

Duverger distinguishes between two different types of origin of the political party. The first is the *electoral and parliamentary* source. As the suffrage was increased in the nineteenth century electoral committees were established (some evolved from the philosophical societies and others were set up by a few close supporters of the

[6] Ostrogorski, M., Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Macmillan, London, 1902, p. ix.
[7] Ibid. p.44.
[8] Macridis, R., (ed.), Political Parties, Contemporary Trends and Ideas, Harper, London, 1967, pp. 10-11, Neumann, S., (ed.), Modern Political Parties, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962, pp. 395-6.
[9] Op. cit. Duverger p. xxiii.
[10] Lees, J., and Kimber, R., Political Parties In Modern Britain, Routledge, London, 1992, p. 1.

parliamentary candidate) to present the candidate to the electorate. Their role was to bridge the gap between the electors and the political elites that sought power. It was the institutionalisation of the interactions between parliamentary groups and the electoral committees that was to give birth to political parties.[11]

Where committees were created when there was no representation in parliament represents the second source – the *extra parliamentary* origin. Trade Unions, philosophical societies, churches, ex-servicemen's associations, business interests are all 'external' birthplaces for the formation of political parties. Duverger then draws an interesting distinction in the character of the parties that have evolved from these two separate types of origin:

> 'parties of extra-parliamentary origin show a much greater independence of [elected representatives] than those born and bred in the shade of the Chamber. For the latter the winning of seats in political assemblies is the essence of the life of the party, the very reason for its existence and the supreme purpose of its life. On the other hand, for the former, the electoral and parliamentary struggle remains very important, but it is only one of the elements in the general activity of the party, one of the means, among others, that it uses to realize its political ends ...Certainly these differences cannot be explained entirely by dissimilar origins, but their influence is incontestable ... The result is that parties of extra-parliamentary origin, even when attached by their doctrine to the parliamentary system never allot to it the same value as do parties of the first type. Their

[11] Op. cit. Duverger p.xxix

development therefore entails a certain independence in fact (often unconscious and repressed) with regard to parliaments and elections.'[12]

Clearly, political fronts would logically be located in the second broad spectrum – that is they have an extra parliamentary origin, although the importance that terrorist groups attach to the 'electoral and parliamentary struggle' varies considerably, and indeed may be relatively unimportant.[13]

Duverger goes on to identify four party types. The first is known as the caucus[14] party and is generally made up of a small number of influential notables that wield disproportionate power in relation to their numerical size. It can be a *direct* caucus (made up of 'traditional social elites') or an *indirect* caucus (consisting of 'institutional' elites composed of members selected by groups such as Trade Unions, Trades Councils and so on). The British Conservative party could be classed as a case of the former, whereas the Labour party has, traditionally at least, been more akin to the latter.

The second party type is the branch. Unlike the caucus party its emphasis is on attracting the masses and therefore it is not surprising that it is a type that has been adopted by socialists (although it has also been utilised by Catholic parties or parties with 'fascist tendencies'), with its stress on branch meetings and political education.

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[12] Ibid. pp. xxxv-vi .
[13] In the 1970s the IRA was opposed to fighting elections but in the 1980s (after the hunger strikes) it decided to allow Sinn Fein to engage in the electoral process. Even then the party abstained from taking its seats at Westminster.
[14] See op. cit. Ostrogorski chapters 3-6 in Part II and 1-3 in Part III for a more in depth discussion of 'the caucus'.

The cell, the third type, is based around occupation, and might, for example, be a workforce of a factory, or 'area' cells might exist to unite those that do not work in such a large scale working environment (such as doctors and lawyers). The emphasis here is on worker solidarity and discipline. It is also 'perfectly suited to clandestine action.'[15] A communist invention, it 'provided an excellent basis for the education and enrolment of the masses.'[16] It is a type that has been most associated with the communist parties. Consisting of small disciplined cells it is not ideal for fighting an election but, unlike the caucus and the branch parties, electoral and parliamentary matters are secondary.

The fourth type that Duverger identifies is the 'militia party', where 'the breach between political parties and parliamentary action is even more definite.'[17] This party is a fascist creation and represents a type of private army, with a belief in the necessity of violence:

> 'Both [cell and militia parties] take part in elections, organize intense electoral propaganda, and weave complicated parliamentary intrigues. But that is only one aspect of their action, and not the essential one. The important thing is that they employ electoral and parliamentary machinery in order to destroy it, and not so as to act within its framework.'[18]

Duverger adds that it is rare that parties fit strictly into any one of the above types with overlap possible and indeed likely. Although it would appear that, of the four, political fronts are more akin to the militia party type, and that they indeed may behave in a

[15] Op. cit. Duverger p. 30.
[16] Ibid. p. 31.
[17] Ibid. p. 36.

similar fashion[19], there are key differences between the two. In the case of militia parties (both fascist[20] and communist) the *militia grows out of the party* underlined by Duverger's assertion that 'no political party has ever been exclusively formed on the basis of the militia..... On the other hand almost all parties are driven to form some kind of militia, more or less embryonic, when they wish to maintain order at their meetings and protect their speakers and supporters.'[21] [22]

In the early 1920s Italy's fascist squads sprung from the 'fasci di combattimento' political group and in the same decade Action Francaise created its 'defence wing', the Camelots du Roi. In Britain the 'flying squads' emerged from Rotha Orman's British Fascists while in Germany Hitler's Storm Detachment (SA) grew out of the National Socialist German Workers' Party.[23] During the Resistance in occupied Europe 'the Communist parties were the only ones who managed to form an autonomous military organization during the occupation, and to make it the backbone of powerful popular militia forces after the Liberation.'[24]

With political fronts, however, the converse is usually the case – they emerge from the terrorist group. The Ulster Democratic Party emanated from the UDA and the PUP from

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[18] Ibid. p. 39
[19] See 'SF campaign run on fascist lines', by Ruth Dudley Edwards, Irish Times, June 11th 2001.
[20] For a typological description of fascism see Who Were The Fascists? by Larsen et al.
[21] Op. cit. Duverger p.37.
[22] This doesn't mean to say that violent fascist groups or revolutionary communist groups do not exist independently of any political party, such as the War Sport Group, the National Social Action Front and other neo-nazi groups that emerged in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, or indeed the Red Army Faction or the Red Brigades, but in the case of fascist or communist militia parties it is the militia that usually emerges from the party.
[23] See Eatwell, Roger, Fascism, A History, Chatto and Windus Ltd., London, 1995, Part II.
[24] Op. cit. Duverger p.40.

the UVF, while Sinn Fein was 'adopted' as the IRA's political front in the late 1940s.[25] In Spain in 1974 the Basque Revolutionary Party (EIA) and the Popular Unity Party (HB) sprung from ETA (pm) and ETA (m). Thus, the controlling influence between the fascist party and its militia comes from the party whereas it is the terrorist group that controls the political front, hence the reason why political fronts tend not to have the charismatic and personal leadership styles of command found in fascist parties.

As a fascist creation there are other reasons why a political front should not be categorised as Duverger's militia party type. Fascism[26], known as the 'Third Way', like communism, is its own creed. It is a dogma that, though nationalistic, is international in scope. Fascist parties, like communist ones, are therefore concerned with *how* the state is run whereas the secular terrorist group is primarily concerned with *who* runs it. With fascism violence forms part of the creed, with secular terrorism it is (in theory at least) the means to an end. The use of violence, the threat of violence and intimidation are seen as necessary even *after* the fascist state has been achieved whereas with secular terrorism it is seen, or so it is claimed, purely as the means to achieve secession. In this case, unlike the fascist militia party, political fronts foresee a time when the use of violence may no

[25] Sinn Fein was actually formed in 1905, over a decade before the IRA, but it drifted into oblivion in the 1930s and 1940s until the IRA took it over as its political front.

[26] Fascism and thus fascist parties have proven notoriously difficult to define for two reasons. Firstly there are many different types of 'fascisms' (See Payne, S., 'The Concept of Fascism', Who Were The Fascists, Larsen, S., Hagtvet, B., Myklebust, J., (eds.), Global Book Resources Ltd., Oxon, 1980, pp. 21-2 for the 'varieties of fascism') that are influenced by each country's own national and cultural traditions. Secondly, the Second World War experience of fascism that led to its discredit has prompted more contemporary fascist groups to distance themselves from 'traditional' fascism, hence the terms 'neo fascism' or 'post fascism'. Roger Eatwell broadly describes fascism as 'a serious ideology which emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, and which is based on an attempt to create a holistic-national radical Third Way' (Eatwell xxiii) (neither communist or capitalist). Stanley Payne in his essay 'The Concept of Fascism' constructs a criterial definition beginning with the fascist 'negations' of anti liberalism, anti communism and anti conservatism. Fascists aim to create a nationalist authoritarian state with the 'attempted mass mobilization [along with the] militarization of political relationships and style, and with the goal of a mass party militia.' (Payne pp. 20-1.)

longer be required. Gerry Adams, for example, often repeats his apparent desire to see the IRA go into retirement.

It therefore follows that, when characterising political fronts, they are 'anti-system' or 'anti-regime' in a very different way to communist or fascist militia parties. While the latter are anti-democratic, ie. anti the predominant *system* in which they are operating, the former are opposed to the *prevailing jurisdiction* over the territory that they want ceded. Fascism and communism seek to overthrow democracy whereas the secular terrorist group, and therefore its political front, do not necessarily aim to change the system but rather the territorial jurisdiction over which the state governs. It is perhaps ironic that contemporary fascist, or 'post-fascist', and communist parties play the democratic rules of the game in seeking to 'destroy the system from within', whereas secular terrorist groups and their political fronts use anti-democratic practices when ideologically they may have no particular aversion to democracy and indeed may even claim to espouse it.[27] Today, European fascist movements shirk from any notions that they might have links with violence for fear of being banned.[28]

While a constituent element of the political front is the same as many fascist or communist militia parties – the justification for the use of violence or the threat of the use of violence - political fronts do not, for the above reasons, fit in with Duverger's militia party model. It is also worth considering, however, Duverger's theory of minor parties. The two minor party types are 'personality parties' that are based around parliament

[27] Sinn Fein, the UDP, the PUP all support democracy according to their websites. That is not to say, however, that in reality should political fronts ever attain power they will not stick to the methods that have brought them success and facilitated their achievement of power.

(resembling the caucus party) and the 'permanent minority party', which can be based on 'ethnical or geographical minorities, upon religious minorities and upon political minorities.'[29] The second of these categories 'represent[s] either a race or a region which will not accept complete fusion with the national community. Some are separatist, others autonomist, others again federalist, and some simply regionalist.'[30]

Duverger continues:

> 'Expressing an opinion which is they feel not that of the nation and which has little support, they are led into an attitude of protestation and intransigence by the same psychological mechanism which leads an inferiority complex to show itself in aggressiveness. The absence of responsibilities for government and of a reasonable chance of ever assuming them removes furthermore any check to their opposition tendency. They are demagogic by nature, the most demagogic of all parties. When they are supported by a homogenous and solid fraction of the population – a geographical or religious minority – the tendency is even more emphasized, for outbidding and violence are ways of retaining their basic supporters, of maintaining their separation from the national community, of keeping their individuality and their heterodoxy unsullied. If a party is clearly in a minority in the country as a whole but in a majority in certain districts its attitude

[28] Such as the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), which has now been outlawed.
[29] Op. cit. Duverger p. 291.
[30] Ibid. p. 292.

becomes autonomist or even secessionist, which may imperil the unity of the country.'[31]

The problem with classifying political fronts as permanent minority parties is that the model describes a political party that might resort to violence rather than a terrorist group that might resort to using a political front. What Duverger does describe here is the ethnic, geographical and/or religious constituency that may *potentially* provide support for a secessionist terrorist group, which in turn may motivate it to establish a political front; for the assertion here is that the political front is a phenomena usually associated with secular/nationalist groups rather than groups pursuing communism and fascism.[32]

Alexander and Pluchinsky argued that the IRA and ETA both 'have legitimate political parties to spread their propaganda. This is an immense advantage over the FCOs [Fighting Communist Organisations] which do not have this propaganda outlet.'[33] There are, it is suggested, three reasons why these FCOs did not have political fronts. Firstly, they saw it as impossible to achieve peaceful parliamentary transition thus leaving the only path of revolutionary violence. This would count out any prospects of using a political front as a sign of moderation, as they are inherently hostile to compromise. Even so their ideology might suggest that as the 'proletariat' need to be mobilised that some kind of *extra parliamentary* structure be established to achieve this. This, according to

[31] Ibid. p. 294.
[32] Although there are numerous 'hybrid' groups that merge, for example, secular ideology with communism or religion. The secular component, however, makes it more likely that the group will establish a political front than groups that have a minimal secular element to its ideology.
[33] Alexander, Y. and Pluchinsky, D., Europe's Red Terrorists, The Fighting Communist Organizations, Frank Cass, London, 1992, pp. 36-7. The groups under study here are the Red Army Faction, the November 17 group, First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO), Direct Action, Fighting

Alexander and Pluchinsky, would involve reaching the 'fighting communist party', or civil war, stage. The authors argue, however, that none of the FCOs had reached this phase (as at 1992) nor indeed have they since as such terrorist groups have been defeated or have ceased operations since the end of the Cold War.[34] The Red Brigades wrote of:

> '... the still embryonic development of the objective and subjective conditions of the revolutionary process that do not permit the 'upgrade' from a political-military vanguard, which essentially establishes a 'propaganda' relationship with the masses, to an organic political-military vanguard, which directs and organizes the political and military struggle of class layers.'[35]

The second reason why revolutionary communist groups did not generally employ political fronts is that they were engaged in an international struggle against imperialism and 'Americanism'. Therefore, their preoccupation with an international conflict against capitalism also limits the potential value that any domestic political front might have. This overlaps with the third and most significant factor of all – there is no domestic ethnic or nationalist community to potentially provide a natural constituency of support for the groups, though there may be ideologically sympathetic or supportive individuals or groups (such as Autonomia or Organised Autonomy in Italy[36]).

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Communist Cells (CCC), the Red Brigades and the Revolutionary Left (Dev Sol). The main propaganda outlets for these groups are their own communiques and left wing journals (some of their own).

[34] Although one report suggested that the Red Army Faction had come out of retirement, after anti-globalisation protests ('Red Army Faction Back', The Times, May 22nd, 2001).

[35] Red Brigades, 'Twenty Final Theses', quoted in op. cit. Alexander and Puchinsky, p. 27.

[36] See 'Italy: Behind the Mask', website: http://www.nybooks.com/articles/7727 .

This is not to argue that there are no revolutionary groups that also have an ethnic or religious dimension or that there can't be a merging of secular with a form of communist or religious ideology. Even in these 'hybrid' cases, however, the secular dimension has rendered it more likely that they would use a political front compared to those groups that are purely revolutionary or religious. The Irish National Liberation Army, for example, which struggles for social revolution as well as Irish unification, has the Irish Republican Socialist Party as its political front. In practice both Hezbollah and Hamas have a secular element to their outlooks and this is why these religious groups have found it necessary to engage in the conventional political process.[37] So too has the radical Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan which recently created a political front to take part in elections.[38]

There is little doubt that, using the broad definition above, political fronts can be classified as political parties but it is mostly democracies that they operate in and it is clear that they do not play to the rules of the democratic game[39]. David Held focuses on the obligations of citizens that enjoy democratic rights: 'Individuals should be free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives; that is they enjoy equal rights (*and, accordingly, equal obligations*) in the specification of the framework which

[37] See Klein, M., 'Competing Brothers: The Web of Hamas-PLO Relations', and Zisser, E., 'Hizballah in Lebanon – At the Crossroads', Terrorism and Political Violence, Summer 1996, Vol. 8, No. 2.
[38] News Analysis, 'The PR Minefield in Central Asia', website: http://www.ianaradionet.com , August 6th 2001.
[39] Democracy is a fluid concept. Its meaning has changed through history and there are very different contemporary examples of it. Robert Dahl argued that a liberal democracy is a system of government that needs : 'the freedom to form and join organisations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right to compete for support and votes; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections; institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.' R. Dahl, quoted in: Z. Gitelman, 'The Democratisation Of Russia In Comparative Perspective', S. White, A. Pravda, Z. Gitelman, Developments In Russian Politics 4, London 1990, p.267.

generates and limits the opportunities available to them, *so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others.'* [40](italics added)

Paul Wilkinson stresses aspects in the traditions of liberal political theory that he felt had been neglected – 'obligations, duties, law, authority and order', for 'liberal democratic rights all ultimately depend upon the viability of the liberal state.'[41] Thus, he emphasises three key pillars of the liberal state – the political obligation and support willed by its citizens, the supremacy of its rule of law and 'the right use of the state's monopoly of legitimate force in order to preserve internal peace and order, to enforce the law, and to defend the community against external enemies'.[42] Crucially the monopoly on the use of force by the liberal democratic state is 'legitimate and legally authorised'.[43] Another feature of democracy is the subordination of the military to the civil power. It is against these elements of democracy that political fronts fall down as democratic political parties. First and foremost they are part and parcel of, and fully justify, the existence of an illegal and alternative secret army dedicated to undermining the legitimate state. It is true that a group of citizens may withhold support from the state but the democratic principle of consent does not allow a minority to impose its will on the majority. They also justify the use of terrorism and are subordinated to their terrorist bosses, flying in the face of the democratic assumption that the military is controlled by the civilian power. They may also employ undemocratic electoral practices such as intimidation and poll fraud.[44]

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[40] Held, D., quoted in Sorensen, G., Democracy and Democratization, Westview Press, Oxford, p.10.
[41] Wilkinson, P., Terrorism And The Liberal Democratic State, Macmillan, London, 1977, pp. 4-5.
[42] Ibid. pp. 12-18.
[43] Ibid. p. 19.
[44] Throughout its history Sinn Fein has been widely suspected of engaging in electoral fraud, such as the use of multiple voting, aswell as intimidatory tactics (see part II).

Notwithstanding these clear affronts to a functioning democracy it is also interesting to see how political fronts square up to democratic parties in terms of their functions. Definitions of political parties vary considerably, between 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' interpretations. Rose states that 'the only attributes necessary by definition are that a party nominates candidates and contests elections ... A general election can be reduced to a popularity contest between competing political personalities, or a vote of confidence (or no confidence) in the relative competence of alternative teams of politicians.'[45] This could easily include those political fronts that engage in the electoral process, though Rose argues that it is American writers that often use this minimalist definition of party politics, whereas 'European writers normally assume that parties have larger political purposes.'[46]

If one was to use a more 'European' interpretation (as the cases in this thesis are in Europe) the functions of democratic parties then are: to provide a channel of expression between the rulers and the ruled, to serve as agents of interest aggregation, to hold office, to implement collective goals when in office, [and] to recruit candidates for office.[47] This is not adequate, however, in explaining the functions of minor parties in democracies. As Lees and Kimber argue they have a different role to that of major parties: 'the role of minor parties, such as the nationalists, is often much more akin to a pressure group.'[48] These smaller parties do, nevertheless, have a political programme and produce manifestos to the electorate in the distant hope that they may be elected or indeed that they may (more realistically) hold the balance of power or form part of a coalition

[45] Rose, R., Do Parties Make A Difference?, Macmillan, London, 1980, p.10.
[46] Ibid.

government. Apart from adherence to assumptions that a commitment to democracy entails, political fronts may also then differ from democratic parties by, for example, refusing to 'legitimise' the parliament of the state by not taking up its seats, thereby effectively denying parliamentary representation to their supporters and usurping the role of parties as channels for developing participation and as crucial linkages between state and society.[49] This would also preclude the party from political debate and decision-making in parliament.

This is not to say that 'democracies' do not have undemocratic features or indeed that democratic parties do not have undemocratic practices. In fact, as Duverger notes, no true democracy has ever existed, and Alan Ware emphasises the undemocratic nature of parties.[50] But it is the work of Robert Michels that is most noted for its elucidation of the 'strong centralizing and oligarchical tendencies' of political parties.[51] Only a small number of people actually make the decisions, partly because it would simply take too long to consult everybody. Democracy is therefore 'utterly incompatible with strategic promptness' and is 'not for home consumption, but is rather an article made for export.'[52]

What is of particular interest for this thesis is that Michels refers us to a resemblance between democratic political parties and military organisations.[53] It would therefore seem

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[47] See Hague R., Harrop, M., and Breslin, S., Comparartive Government and Politics, An Introduction, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1992, pp. 235-6.
[48] Op. cit. Lees and Kimber p. 13.
[49] Pridham, G., Securing Democracy, Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Southern Europe, Routledge, London and New York, 1993, p.2.
[50] Ware, A., 'Mechanisms for democracy', Held, D., and Pollitt, C., New Forms Of Democracy, Sage, 1986, pp. 131-2.
[51] Michels, R., Political Parties, Dover, New York, 1959, p.43.
[52] Ibid. p. 42.
[53] Ibid. p. 43.

logical to suggest, given the true centralised and oligarchic nature of political parties, that, internally at least, political fronts are not that dissimilar to 'democratic' parties. If 'oligarchy ... is inherent in all party organisation'[54], and political fronts emanate from the terrorist organisation, then the 'military' structure of the terrorist group conditions the political front (which it controls) to be oligarchic. In other words the oligarchic tendency that has developed in 'conventional' political parties is also an inherent and indeed necessary characteristic of political fronts if they are to be utilised to greatest effect, and in this respect, therefore, they are similar to what we usually consider to be democratic parties.

It is in the 'external' that political fronts differ from 'democratic' political parties where they clearly breach some of the central tenets of democracy that the latter adhere to – the rule of law, acceptance of the state as the sole legitimate holder of the monopoly of the means of force and the pursuance of political goals by exclusively peaceful means.

## Conclusion

In summary, political fronts are characterised by dual membership with the terrorist group and their subordinate status to it. Representing the public face of a movement, they are usually, but not invariably, associated with secular terrorist groups or organisations that have a secular component to their ideology. This is because the secular terrorist group has an ethnic or geographical constituency of potential support. Though there may be overlap in terms of fundraising and propaganda activities they are not the same as

[54] Ibid. p. 11.

other types of fronts or 'charities' that are used to sustain different types of terrorist group. While it is not always the case, most political fronts can be classified as political parties, although they are not democratic political parties. Despite this they primarily operate within democracies while justifying anti-democratic practice – the use of violence or the threat of violence to attain political goals. Due to the difficulties of matching political fronts with Duverger's militia party and permanent minority party models it would seem reasonable to suggest that they represent a category of party in their own right. The 'political front', therefore, merits its own unique location in the wide spectrum of political parties.

# Section 2 - The Internal Environment

This section will assess the extent to which the 'internal' environment has determined the strategy of the IRA, the UDA and the UVF vis a vis the use of a political front. The first chapter (chapter 4) outlines the ideology, organisational structure and leadership of the three groups. Chapter 5 assesses how these have impacted on the nature of the relationship between the terrorist organisation and the political front, and on the role of the political front. Chapter 6 will assess the impact that the notion of 'violence as a habit' has had on a group's strategy, both at the organisational and individual level. Section 3 will then assess the effect that the 'external environment', including the impact of popular support, state response, and other factors in the domestic and international environment, has had on terrorist group strategy vis a vis the use of a political front.

# Chapter 4 - Ideology, Organisational Structure and Leadership

## The IRA

### Ideology

The IRA's ideology emanates from the 1916 Easter proclamation of an Irish Republic and the establishment of the 1919 Dail (not recognised by the British government) when Sinn Fein won seventy-three from one hundred and five seats. The IRA and Sinn Fein were bitterly opposed to the 1922 treaty that brought about the partition of the island. It has therefore viewed Westminster rule, any Northern Ireland assembly and the Dublin administration as illegitimate – evident in the Army Council order of 1927 that prevented IRA members from voting in elections.[1] The Council is still seen as the legitimate government of the whole of a united Ireland, inheriting the legacy of the 1919 Dail. Its primary objective, therefore, is to end partition and rid the British from the island. There is no room for compromise on complete independence, with the use of 'physical force' seen as the means to achieve its political objectives.

The physical force tradition – the belief that it was only through armed struggle that the British would eventually leave Ireland - has permeated republican strategy ever since Wolfe Tone's rebellion of 1798. This heritage has been underpinned by another strand in republican ideology, as espoused by its chief proponent Patrick Pearse, - the cathartic

[1] Although, as noted above, this rule was subsequently broken in the 1930s.

value of violence and its use as an end in itself. He saw the Easter Rising as a sacrificial act and 'believed in the rejuvenating power of blood'[2]. Indeed, such acts and the creation of martyrs should persevere through generations, he argued, via a process of what he termed 'apostolic succession' - the idea that uprisings could act as nationalist statements to keep the republican ideal alive[3]. Physical force, embodied in the IRA, has therefore been the driving force in the republican movement, violence as the sole means to achieve its objectives. Even military setbacks or failed campaigns were seen as virtuous because they represented the glory of failure and oppression, and helped to sustain the notion of victimhood that accompanies republican tradition. As Smith maintains 'the self-sacrificial image is a compelling symbol of republican ideology and something from which the movement continues to draw much of its inner strength ... [sustaining] the movement's purpose and cohesion.'[4]

Set against the purity of the gunman and the martyr in the history of Irish republican ideology is the belief that politics is the 'domain of the unprincipled where the purity of the ideology could be entrapped and undermined in the murky world of compromise, careerism and expediency'.[5] No more was this evident than in those that negotiated the 'treachery' of partition; and in the 1950s, while men like Sean South[6] were sanctified in song, 'nationalist politicians were a curious mixture of pathetic ineffectuality cum petty

[2] Bishop P. and Mallie E., The Provisional IRA, Corgi, London, 1992, p.24.
[3] Smith M., Fighting For Ireland, The Military Strategy Of The Irish Republican Movement, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p.11.
[4] Ibid. p. 13.
[5] Ibid. p. 20.
[6] Sean South was an IRA 'volunteer' who was killed in the 1956-62 Border Campaign.

corruption.'[7] There has therefore been a long held and deep suspicion of any political involvement by republican purists.[8]

IRA dogma has also maintained that its minority status does not mean to say that it is in the wrong. In fact, on the contrary – the Irish public is seen as having strayed from what should have been its true destiny. This means that, ideologically at least, popular support has not been a 'requirement ... as an aid to revolt. Historically, the absence of the desire to cultivate a political constituency has meant that the movement has seen little need to produce social, political and economic policies which would encourage a wide following.'[9] As one republican stated in the 1920s 'The people of a nation may not voluntarily surrender their independence ... if a majority is found that would vote such a surrender, the vote is invalid legally and morally and a minority is justified in upholding the independence of their country.'[10] The Provisional IRA also followed the old IRA 'in not accepting that the majority will should prevail if it is incorrect.'[11]

The above combination of an uncompromising political ideology, the tradition of physical force and the legacy of Pearse suggests an unbridgeable and watertight intransigence. In practice, however, republican ideology has in fact been diluted by a pragmatism designed to advance the organisation's influence without threatening its credibility in the eyes of its constituency - evident in the fact that abstention has subsequently come to represent merely the refusal to take up seats if elected. While

[7] Caraher, B., (former vice-chairman of the SDLP), quoted in: O' Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff, Belfast, 1993, p.106.
[8] Op. cit. Smith p. 20.
[9] Ibid. p. 22.
[10] Drake, C, 'The Provisional IRA: A Case Study', Terrorism and Political Violence, Summer 1991, Volume 3, No.2, p. 44, quoted from H. Patterson, The Politics of Illusion, London, Hutchinson, 1989, p. 23.

feigning ideological purity and a principled approach in refusing to sit in these institutions, participation in the electoral process itself smacks of a pragmatic approach. For through Sinn Fein (and Saor Eire and Fianna Fail before it) it *has* become involved with the 'illegitimate' political process. Popular support *has*, in fact, been a telling factor behind IRA strategy and the perceived failure of violence *has* led to the search for alternative strategies.

One of the reasons for this pragmatism has been the group's varying adherence over time to its remaining ideological component – republican socialism. The legacies of Finton Lalor and James Connolly have helped to foster this tradition, which has underpinned the movement's overall political objective of a united *socialist* republic. It has also meant that, historically, the main fault line within the group was characterised by the division between militarists that sought unity purely through armed struggle, and the proponents of socialism that wanted to pursue a more political path. The prominence of Marxist protagonists on occasion pushed the organisation in a leftward direction with a greater emphasis on workers' rights and mass mobilisation. This in turn promoted political development (in the face of deep suspicions from the military 'purists'), usually when violence alone as a strategy was perceived to have faltered and when left wing adherents managed to sway the 'organisation men' against the wishes of the 'militarists'.

The contradictions between these components of IRA ideology are glaring. Given that the IRA is totally committed to the national cause how can it genuinely espouse Marxist ideology that envisages the 'withering away' of the state? Secondly, 'atheistic' communism is completely anathema to the community (Northern Catholics) that the IRA

[11] Op. cit. Drake p. 44.

has claimed to represent. Finally, republican socialism hardly sits comfortably with the notion of courting Washington and Irish-American opinion.

## The 1969 Split

In December 1969 a General Army Convention was held to determine the future ideological and strategic path of the IRA. Two proposals put forward by the Chief of Staff, Cathal Goulding, were to be ratified – the first was to establish a 'National Liberation Front between Sinn Fein, the Irish Communist Party and other left-wing groups. The other was to drop the traditional Republican policy of abstention so that Sinn Fein representatives, if elected, could take their seats in either the Dail, Stormont or Westminster.'[12] It seemed that the IRA was taking on an increasingly socialist agenda, which in turn meant greater involvement in 'conventional' politics. This direction, and the two proposals, were anathema to the traditional hardliners who, under the leadership of Sean MacStiofain, were bitterly opposed to the dismantling of the key tenet of abstention from the Dail and Westminster, and the legitimisation that such a policy would accord to the two 'unlawful' states in Ireland.

Goulding saw the IRA's role as preparing the masses for a socialist revolution but only when the conditions were right, which was apparently not the case in the late 1960s when he refused to allow the organisation to take full advantage of the civil rights movement. It was this policy, according to the traditionalists, that had left the Catholics in the North

[12] Coogan, T., quoted in, 'Proceedings of the Irish Republican Army General Army Convention, December 1969', by Horgan J. and Taylor, M., Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1997), p. 151.

defenceless against Protestant extremists and had led to the embarrassing jibe that the IRA stood for 'I Ran Away'.

The main factor behind the split, however, was the prospect that that sacred tenet of republican ideology – abstention - was to be ditched. Those that remained with Goulding became known as the Official IRA while those that departed were referred to as the Provisional IRA. The 1969 split was mirrored in Sinn Fein, with the formation of Provisional Sinn Fein a month later. Henceforth, it was the 'Provisionals' that adopted the mantle of traditional republicanism – that is, its ideology was still based on the 1916 Proclamation, aiming for 'a democratic, socialist Republic, consisting of a 32-county Ireland divided into four regions, Ulster, Connaught, Munster and Leinster.'[13] The socialist strand, however, perhaps predictably, was to take a back seat after the split.

The adoption of Marxist doctrine on the part of the IRA has therefore increased the likelihood of engagement in the conventional political process as a means of giving political representation to the masses of the 'oppressed' it has sought to mobilise (see chapter 7). It was this objective that lay behind the OIRA's rejection of the policy of abstention from the political process. However, ironically, as Connor Cruise O'Brien argues, the new PIRA 'had better chances of winning both influential and popular support' than the OIRA both in the North and in the Republic.[14] In the North 'the formidable thing about the new IRA', he states, 'was its simple relevance to the situation' where afflicted Catholics could identify with the Provisionals, and where there was no theoretical communist jargon or fanciful notion of some alliance between Protestant and

[13] Appendix, Conflict Studies, Ulster: Consensus And Coercion, No. 50, October 1974, p. 22.
[14] O'Brien, C., States Of Ireland, Anchor Press, London, 1972, pp. 205-8.

Catholic workers.[15] The 'Officials'' analysis seemed to be equally dubious in the South 'as very few people ... had any desire for a revolution [and] this cut [the movement] off from popular support.'[16] Nevertheless, whilst the PIRA may have been more relevant as the defender of the Catholics, its ultimate objective of the return of the Six Counties to the rest of the island also seemed unrealistic for as long as they discounted the views of the majority of the population in the North (see chapter 7).

The pragmatism that emerged with the new leadership in the 1970s and that was to lead to the end of the long held policy of abstention from the Dail in 1986 had very little to do with republican socialism. The new fault line in the movement emanated from the growing prominence of Sinn Fein within the movement and the increasing engagement in the conventional electoral process on the part of mainstream republicanism. Many were suspicious of the new path, even though Sinn Fein was used as a tactical device to further the overall struggle against the British state. Thus, the traditional fault line between republican socialists and militarists has been replaced by the rift between those that have supported the leadership's 'struggle on all fronts' and those who are opposed to the increasing engagement with British structures. Both the socialist influence and more lately the Adams/McGuinness strategy have entailed compromising traditional republican ideology.

For the purposes of this particular chapter the potency and strength of the IRA's nationalist ideology has helped to sustain the organisation's rigid and centralised structure, which in turn has ensured that Sinn Fein has, until very recently at least, been

[15] Ibid. p. 205.
[16] Ibid. p. 208.

under the direct control of the Army Council. As such, unlike the political forays of the 1930s that represented socialist leanings, the modern Sinn Fein has in the main been utilised as a tactical tool by the republican leadership in its armed struggle for Irish unification.

## Structure

As far as the current structure of the organisation is concerned the hierarchy resembles the functional organisational chart of a large business.[17] At the top of the tree is the General Army Convention which is an organised meeting of around 100-200 selected delegates from different commands around Ireland[18]and, according to its constitution, it is supposed to meet every two years (but is subject to postponements) in order to select the twelve member Army Executive. It is believed, however, that the GAC has met far more infrequently than this.[19]

The Army Executive meets every 6 months[20] although again the frequency of these meetings is subject to change. Its role includes monitoring the Army Council's activities 'on behalf of all GAC representatives'[21], but its most important function is the appointment of members of the Council. The IRA is run by the seven member Council including the Chief of Staff, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. It is the 'Supreme Authority when the General Army Convention is not in session' and is 'the

[17] Horgan, J., and Taylor, M., 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 9, Autumn 1997, No. 3, p. 4.
[18] Ibid. p. 4.
[19] It is believed that after meeting in 1969 it did not reconvene until 1986.
[20] Boyne, S., 'Uncovering The Irish Republican Army', from Frontline: The IRA And Sinn Fein, Jane's Intelligence Review, August 1st 1996, website: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ira/inside/org.html .

overall PIRA leadership, responsible for the execution of all military policies in line with overall strategies.' [22] It meets at least once a month. Although it sees itself as the true government of a united Irish Republic its role is very much that of coordinating the strategy and tactics of the IRA against the British. The planning and implementation of Army Council decisions are undertaken by the General Headquarters Staff (GHQ) which acts as a link between the Council and the Northern and Southern commands. GHQ, which is based in Dublin, is seen as the 'governing body' in between Army Council meetings and refers decisions back to the Council.[23]

The Northern Command covers Northern Ireland as well the Republic's border counties, Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth,' and consists of 'at least' five brigades – those of Belfast, Derry, Donegal, Armagh and Tyrone-Monaghan.[24] These brigades consist of three or four Active Service Units, each of which has an Officer Commanding (OC) who reports to the Brigade Commander. The Southern Command covers the other counties of the Republic of Ireland and has less members than the Northern Command, with a Dublin brigade and 'a number of smaller units in the provinces.'[25] It also consists of Brigadiers, OCs and ASUs. According to Horgan and Taylor (1997) Southern Command very much acts as the 'logistic support' or the 'Quartermaster' for Northern Command[26]. As it is not on the front line of the conflict it plays less of a role in taking major decisions. It primarily engages itself in the training of 'Volunteers', the provision

[21] Op. cit. Horgan and Taylor, 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', p. 5.
[22] PIRA's Constitution, quoted in op. cit. Horgan, and Taylor, 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', p. 5.
[23] Op. cit. Horgan, J, and Taylor, M., 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', p. 7.
[24] Op. cit. Boyne.
[25] Ibid.

of funding and safehouses, and the storage and movement of weapons. For example, A Limerick ASU of the IRA apparently transports weapons to a Longford-Wetmeath ASU which in turn delivers them across the border to the Northern Command.[27]

The active membership of the IRA consists of no more than a few hundred at any one time although there is also a 'large support network consisting of thousands'.[28] 'Non operational members', as Horgan and Taylor call them, engage in hiding, moving and storing weapons, providing safe houses and perhaps financial provision. Sean Boyne suggests that the strength of the IRA in 1996 amounted to around 400 hard-core activists (including 'about 40 middle-ranking members of the IRA who make operational decisions'), 'with perhaps a similar number [400] of 'auxiliary' or 'second-line' activists who can be called on in a crisis'.[29] In March 2002 a PSNI Special Branch source verified that IRA membership stood at around 400-500.[30] As far as the group's weaponry is concerned it is known to have an armoury roughly the size of that of a regular army infantry battalion, consisting of 600 rifles or more, a variety of small arms and medium to heavy weapons, and as much as two tonnes of plastic explosive.

# Leadership

Following the second world war an increasing amount of 'Northerners' held senior positions in the IRA[31] and 'after 1948 when the Free State declared itself a republic, the

[26] Op. cit. Horgan and Taylor, 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', p. 8.
[27] Ibid. pp. 8-9.
[28] Ibid. p. 3.
[29] Op. cit. Boyne.
[30] Special Branch source, interview.
[31] O'Ballance, 'IRA Leadership Problems', Wilkinson, P. (ed.), British Perspectives On Terrorism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1981, p. 78.

IRA largely confined its military actions to Northern Ireland whilst maintaining its headquarters in Dublin.'[32] As Northern Ireland was regarded as 'occupied' territory it was natural that the Northern IRA wanted to see more 'action' against the British there. Indeed, it was the 'Southerners' that had become associated with the more 'political' left wing tide of the IRA in the late 1960s, and it was the 'Northerners' who became frustrated with the lack of action or military 'defence'. As such the Southern IRA was linked more with the Officials whilst the Northern IRA were associated with the Provisionals and so from 1970 'Northern leaders were elected to the Provisional Executive Committee and the Army Council.'[33]

The role of prisoners should not be overlooked as a further significant 'internal' factor behind IRA strategy as it was the arena where the future Northern leadership discussed the way forward. While the security forces appeared to be getting the upper hand against the IRA in the mid 1970s, republican prisoners, including Gerry Adams, were reassessing its strategy. The prisons were vital in the politicisation of republican inmates and clearly their reading and discussion seminars had an impact on subsequent strategy. Indeed, it is where the idea of the 'Long War' was born. It was also the arena where the 1981 hunger strikes took place – an episode that fundamentally changed the course of republican strategy.

The IRA had always been controlled by the Southern leadership but a new younger leadership had begun to emerge in the North by the mid 1970s. They argued that 'to improve effectiveness the North should have its own administrative structure and more

[32] Op. cit. Drake p. 43.
[33] Op. cit. O'Ballance p. 79.

autonomy over its actions.'[34] The Dublin leadership obliged and by the end of 1976 the Northern Command came into being. It was the emergence of this new Northern leadership that was instrumental in bringing about the Long War strategy. David McKittrick states that the old guard of Daithi O'Connell and Ruairi O'Bradaigh had been taken in by the British pretence of withdrawal from the province, nearly leading to the defeat of the IRA.[35] Henceforth they were gradually marginalised along with their Eire Nua policy [36] in favour of a unitary Irish state – ' a far more uncompromising Republican position.'[37] As far as other republican principles were concerned the new leadership was more pragmatic believing that it shouldn't stick to old rules that damaged them. Crucially it was this change at the top that was to lead to new and unprecedented ways as to how a political front could be utilised.

Asked what the single most important factor was that brought about the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein, the party's Belfast Councillor Michael Browne stated that it was the change in leadership. The real turning point, he argues, came later in 1983 when Adams became President of the party and was someone who 'was capable of dealing with the evolving situation.'[38] If the old guard had not been swept away by this new leadership, he argues, the subsequent changes that took place would not have happened.[39] Greater utilisation of Sinn Fein in this new approach, however, did not represent moderation in the group's attitude towards the use of violence. In fact the opposite was the case as Adams and others restructured the IRA to combat the use of informers.

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[34] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 311.
[35] McKittrick, D., interview.
[36] Eire Nua proposed a federal Ireland that would give unionists a regional power base.
[37] Op. cit. O'Brien, States Of Ireland, p. 111.
[38] Browne, M., interview.
[39] Ibid.

According to Drake the reorganisation was the result of the recognition by PIRA that they were indeed engaged in a 'long war'. Previous PIRA predictions of military victory in the short term had meant that 'long term security and the need to build up a durable political base were not thought to be important'.[40] Until 1977 PIRA was organised into companies, battalions, and brigades, some of which contained as many as 50 men'.[41] However, the security forces had considerable success in penetrating these divisions both because of their size and their 'multi-channel' command structure.[42] Informers meant that many of the IRA leaders and their recruits were rounded up leading to a downturn in military activity. The Provisionals' response was to change the basic structure of the organisation from large brigades to small secret cells in which the members of the Active Service Unit (consisting of four to six 'volunteers'[43]) only knew each other. The cell leader alone knew the identity of his immediate superior to eliminate the danger of informers.[44] Thus the organisation became far more difficult to penetrate, evident in the increased number of attacks in 1979.[45]

Under the new approach the struggle was also to be expanded beyond the military role. IRA strategy had been very much one of violence alone with the role of Sinn Fein (which was illegal until 1974) limited to being the propaganda mouthpiece for the armed struggle and 'community policing' (see chapter 6). In 1977, however, the 'Long War' strategy advocated the widening of the struggle. The main problem for Gerry Adams was that 'the

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[40] Op. cit. Drake p. 47.
[41] Ibid. p. 45.
[42] 'IRA – Tough nut to crack', The Economist, 1st July 1979, p. 19.
[43] Estimates vary as to the size of these cells. The Economist, for example, suggests that the cells contained five to eight men or women (The Economist, op. cit., p. 20) and Drake indicates that as many as twelve members could have been in one Active Service Unit (op. cit. Drake p. 47).
[44] Op. cit. O' Balance p. 80.
[45] See Connell, J., 'Soldiers take back seat in 'Ulsterisation' moves', The Sunday Times, January 17th 1982.

struggle had been limited to armed struggle. Once this stopped, the struggle stopped.'[46] The new approach emphasised that there should be increased activity on the economic, political and cultural fronts aswell as the military. Adams stressed the importance of building a strong political alternative to constitutional politics, through a process of 'active abstentionism'.[47] He also argued that the political struggle had hitherto been too restricted to the North and should be expanded on a thirty-two county basis.[48] The new strategy meant that Sinn Fein would no longer just be the mouthpiece for IRA violence but would be instrumental in establishing a popular infrastructure of 'very necessary things like housing committees, defence groups, advice centres, local policing, people's taxis etc'[49], albeit outside the system. Developing alternative economic and social structures to those of the state, then, was to be one of Sinn Fein's most important functions.

At the beginning of the 1980s 'although Dublin was the seat of the GHQ, and Provisional Sinn Fein HQ, at Kevin Street, Dublin, was still the mouthpiece, the control of the Provisional IRA was firmly in Northern hands.'[50] Meanwhile, hundreds of republican prisoners who were being released after doing time for terrorist offences in the 1970s, and who did not want to go back inside or pick up a gun again, but were still committed to the cause, provided a dedicated pool of activists for the party.[51] The Hunger Strikes provided a second boost to this activist base for the political front. A large army of

[46] Adams G., Before the dawn, Mandarin, London 1997, p. 250.
[47] Op. cit. Provos p. 200.
[48] Patterson H., The Politics Of Illusion, A Political History Of The IRA, Serif, London 1997, p. 185.
[49] Ibid. p. 191.
[50] Op. cit. O'Balance p. 79.
[51] McKittrick, D., interview.

auxiliaries after these two waves of politicisation, along with excellent organisational skills, were, according to McKittrick, the genesis of today's Sinn Fein.[52]

It was the new leadership in the North that was also behind the 'bullet and ballot box' strategy in 1981 as Adams saw opportunities in a more political (though no less militaristic) strategy. Patterson notes, however, that '1983 had seen the first string of 'fraternal' calls from the expanding Sinn Fein political organisation for a 'refinement' of IRA activity to minimise adverse electoral repurcussions.'[53] While Adams preached 'refinement' a member of the IRA Army Council called for escalation.[54] Finally, the 'showdown' between the Southern leadership and that of the North over the issue of abstention in 1986 confirmed the ascendancy of the Northern Command. The decision to take seats in the Irish parliament was too much for some of the traditional hardliners who split from the movement.[55] Nevertheless, the strains between the more traditional militarists who remained and the proponents of the political strategy were to continue so that it often looked as if two separate and contradictory strategies were being pursued.

There is no doubt that the change in leadership in the republican movement was a key factor behind the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein, initially through the so called Long War strategy. Adams was a crucial factor in this but the support of Martin McGuinness was also important as he had the military pedigree[56] to carry hardliners with him. It is a leadership that still remains intact today despite a further split in 1997 when some of its

[52] Ibid.
[53] Op. cit. Patterson p. 196.
[54] Ibid. p. 222 (footnote 60).
[55] To form Republican Sinn Fein, later to be the political front of the Continuity IRA.
[56] See op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 319.

members, disillusioned with the IRA ceasefires and the peace process, broke away to form the Real IRA with the 32 County Sovereignty Movement as its political front.

More than one source suggests that a further important change in the balance of the leadership took place in the Autumn of 2001 after the Colombian episode[57] and the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11th 2001.[58] It has been claimed that at this time the 'Sinn Fein' element took the opportunity to take control of the Army Council:

> '...Adams and his supporters on the IRA's Army Council, who had never sanctioned the Colombian adventure, saw their chance to seize control. On 27 September at a safe house in Dundalk ... the Provisionals' leadership held an historic meeting. Pat Doherty, a Sinn Fein MP, proposed that, for the coming few months, Martin McGuinness should become the IRA's chief-of-staff, putting the pro-decommissioning wing in the driving seat. [According to one senior police officer] 'Colombia had been a monstrous cock up and now no one was going to oppose McGuinness and what he was going to do. The IRA had been led down a potentially dangerous path in Colombia, one which threatened to cut off money and influence in America'.... With the balance of forces now firmly in favour of

[57] In 2001three IRA members were arrested by the Colombian authorities at Bogota airport with false passports and for allegedly training members of the FARC guerrilla group in the use of mortars. It was seen as a propaganda disaster for the IRA as America was furious that, while it had been hosting Sinn Fein members at the White House, the IRA was apparently assisting a group that Washington vehemently opposed. At the time of writing the three are standing trial in Colombia.

[58] Such as Cowen, R. and Boycott, O., in 'Sinn Fein offers hope on IRA arms stockpile', The Guardian, October 8th 2001, and Ruddock, A., (Ruddock, A., 'How America held the IRA over a barrel', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , October 28th 2001).

those who wanted an IRA gesture on arms, the stage was set for an historic move, which up until 18 months ago the Provos vowed would never happen.'[59]

This was disputed, however, by a Special Branch source, who claims that the Colombian episode was officially sanctioned by the Army Council.[60] Whether or not there was a change in the balance of the Army Council at this time, and so whether or not Sinn Fein has after all come to represent moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the movement, the implications of both assessments will be considered in the conclusion.

In general, the IRA's powerful ideology and tightly controlled, disciplined and centralised organisational structure has certainly been a factor that has facilitated the use of a political front, especially when that political front has been used as a tactical device when strict control and coordination from the centre is an imperative. The change in the leadership in the 1970s and its survival since has also ensured that Sinn Fein has continued to be used as a political front in new and innovative ways.

# The Loyalists

## Ideology

Loyalist ideology has also been able to draw on centuries-old traditions. Roy Garland notes that 'the communal banding together in military-style organisations, whether for defence or attack, had a long history in Ireland going back to the 18th century agrarian

[59] Ruddock, A., 'How America held the IRA over a barrel', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , October 28th 2001.

groups such as the Whiteboys, Steel Boys, Hearts of Oak, Peep o' Day Boys, Orange Boys and Defenders.'[61] Boulton, too, recalls a long tradition of Protestant paramilitarism that has sought to keep the minority population in line in the name of Protestant law and order, from the days of the 'Volunteers of the 1780s and the Yeomen to the USC [Ulster Special Constabulary] of the last fifty years [1922-72].'[62]

As far as the loyalist terrorist groups are concerned, however, ideology has been a far less potent force than it has been for their republican opponents. The IRA has been able to draw on the legacy of the 1919 Dail, the physical force tradition of republicanism and centuries of revolt. As pro-state groups (see chapter 9), the loyalists have been members of the dominant majority community, so they could not draw on any legacy, real or imagined, of victimhood, state oppression, discrimination in the workplace and in housing allocation. Nor could they get around the contradiction that they were breaking the laws of a system and jurisdiction that they were trying to protect. In addition to these factors, or maybe because of them, they have in general shown little interest in reading history books or developing a coherent historical ideology from which to draw an appropriate strategy. They have been more interested in 'action' rather than political seminars. One UDA spokesperson said:

> 'The more we talked to people and asked 'what's it all about?' the more we got the same answers, 'no surrender', 'remember 1690', 'fuck the Pope'.... We did a survey asking people when Protestants came to Ulster. When was the Plantation?

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[60] Special Branch source, interview.
[61] Garland R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, p. 10.

> And a lot of other things. A lot of people thought we came here just before World War One, because the only thing they knew was that their Grandfathers were in the war, at the Somme ... nothing before that, absolutely nothing.'[63]

Perhaps more significantly the fact that the IRA's cause is one of an aspiration yet to be, but that *could* be realised, has more potency and romance than an ideology that simply seeks to preserve the status quo and therefore entails fighting for something that already exists.[64] Moreover, the UDA and UVF are but two of a number of organisations that pursue the same aim, including Ian Paisley's hardline Democratic Unionist Party and Bob McCartney's UK Unionist Party, whereas the IRA has been the sole inheritor of a long established tradition of militant republicanism.

The one consistent theme in loyalist (and unionist) ideology is the maintenance of the border with the Irish Republic, whether Northern Ireland remained as part of the United Kingdom or became an independent state in its own right. Around this core theme ideologies have come and gone, from associations with left wing dogma to the secular aspiration of an independent Northern Ireland, which, of course, totally undermines the concept of loyalism to the British state. Although the activities of the groups are illegal, they are justified on the grounds that they are defending their state. As Boulton states,

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[62] Boulton, D., The UVF 1966-73, An Anatomy Of Loyalist Rebellion, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973 p. 22.

[63] 'UDA HQ', quoted in McAuley, J., 'Cuchullain and an RPG-7: the ideology and politics of the Ulster Defence Association', in Hughes, E., Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1991, p. 56.

[64] This is not to say that the loyalists groups might not be suspicious of particular British governments. 'Pro-state' in this thesis refers to being pro the *constitutional* (ie. through the crown and its symbols) status of the province, and not to governments that it has periodaically suspected of wanting to sell them out.

'the men of the UVF, new and old, knew that their actions were 'illegal', but they would have vehemently denied that they were 'unconstitutional'.'[65]

There has also been and still is a much uglier element of loyalist dogma - one that amounts to a form of 'sectarian ideology'. One can't really separate this from the fact that the unionist statelet had sectarianism built into it from its inception and that bigoted attitudes are still rife in general in the province ('large numbers of Protestants vote for the Rev. Ian Paisley, who has always trumpeted his anti-Catholicism').[66] But loyalist sectarianism is represented by the most overt and extreme form of bigotry. McKittrick notes that 'loyalists held in the Maze prison decorated their wing with the slogan, 'Kill 'em all. Let God sort 'em out.' Murals in loyalist areas of Belfast proclaim, 'KAT – kill all Taigs.''[67]

# The UDA

## Ideology

Unlike the IRA, the UDA has suffered from a lack of organisation as well as a generally weak and decentralised leadership that has often been unable to impose its will and discipline on the rest of the organisation, which at times has meant that whole brigades have acted independently of the leadership. Thus, a single coherent, consistent and unified ideology has been difficult to achieve.

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[65] Op. cit. Boulton p. 59.
[66] McKittrick, D., 'From football stadiums to hospitals, daily life in Ulster remains blighted by historic hatred', Independent, 23 August 2002.

As violence erupted in Belfast in 1970, including rioting, pub bombs and car bombs, vigilante groups, known as Defence Associations,[68] were formed 'to block out their small clusters of streets and keep out the enemy'[69]. The leaders of these Associations began to meet and agreed on the formation of the Ulster Defence Association. Thus, 'the original purpose of the UDA was defence', though there were also those 'who wanted to take the fight to the enemy.'[70] It initially emerged as a response to the IRA, but it was also established 'to impress upon Westminster the holocaust which would follow [any] British withdrawal'.[71] Thus, the first ideological thrust of the UDA was the maintenance of the status quo and the preservation of the link with the United Kingdom. From its inception, however, the organisation also had a component that was interested in improving the lot of the loyalist working class. Bruce notes that:

> 'As well as those attracted by the excitement or by the need to defend their areas against republicans, there were a large number of trade unionists and community leaders, often older men, who wanted to see the movement develop some sort of 'forward direction'. While their initial reasons for involvement may have been defensive and informed by little other than a wish to maintain the status quo, they

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[67] Ibid. This is not to say that sectarianism has only existed one side (see, for example O'Callaghan, The Informer, Corgi, London, 1998, p. 83 and 136 for sectarian attitudes within the IRA) but it has been more overt and durable on the loyalist side.

[68] According to Boulton these were set up in Shankhill, Woodvale, Ormeau, Carrick, Donegall Pass, Hammer, Newtownabbey, Abbots Cross, Woodburn, Lisburn Road, Seymour Hill, Suffolk, Castlereagh, Beersbridge, Upper Woodstock and Dundonald (op. cit. p. 145).

[69] Bruce, S., 'The Problems Of 'Pro-State' Terrorism: Loyalist Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 4, Spring 1992, No. 1, p. 69.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Aughey, A., and McIlheney, C., 'The Ulster Defence Association: Paramilitaries and Politics', Terrorism: British Perspectives, from Conflict Quarterly, 2, Paul Wilkinson (ed.), Dartmouth Publishing, Aldershot, 1993, p. 190.

quickly came to see the possibility and importance of improving the position of working-class loyalists.'[72]

In fact, because of the difficulties in developing a coherent ideological path to which the organisation as a whole could become committed, its identification with loyalist workers provided it with a doctrine and the means to mobilise mass support. Cusack and Taylor note that 'in its early days the UDA initially had considerable political success, in terms of mass mobilisation, and through the loyalist workers' strikes'.[73]

This did not, however, resolve the internal strains in the organisation. In fact there were 'major tensions between the military and political sides, between those who saw their role as counter terror and those who saw their role as providing social and political leadership to the loyalist w/class.'[74] There was also rivalry between competing branches and very different views on any prospect of political engagement. For example the Woodvale company supported William Craig's Ulster Vanguard, whereas others (such as Sammy Smyth, editor of Ulster Militant) argued that 'the Ulster Defence Association owes its birth and strength to the promise given that there would be no political involvement of any kind. While it adheres to that promise, it will remain strong and viable; once it enters the political arena then it will start to disintegrate.'[75] Thus, some UDA men were sceptical of any political involvement, mirroring the hardline component of republicanism.[76]

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[72] Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 226.
[73] Cusack, J., and Taylor, M., 'Resurgence Of A Terrorist Organisation – Part 1: The UDA, A Case Study', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 5, Autumn 1993, No. 3, p. 3.
[74] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 77.
[75] Ibid. pp. 85-6.
[76] Ibid.

Nevertheless the overlap that existed between the UDA and trade unions gave it a strong grounding of support in its early days. As Bruce states 'the loose network of shop stewards and union activists was the framework for both the Derry UDA and the area's section of the UWC [Ulster Workers' Council].'[77]

After the successful association with the loyalist working classes in the early 1970s, culminating in the 1974 UWC strike, Cusack and Taylor argue that in the years 1977-87 'the organisation was generally viewed as lacking the psychological and organisational base of a strong ideological commitment.'[78] The establishment of the New Ulster Political Research Group represented the UDA's attempt 'to shift the influence of Protestant militancy from the streets to the conference room.'[79] It was this group that proposed a third way between union with the UK and a united Ireland – an independent Northern Ireland.

It wasn't the first time that loyalists had mooted the idea of independence. Addressing 50,000 Orangemen in 1912, Carson stated that 'We must be prepared [for], ...the morning home rule passes, ourselves to become responsible for the government of the protestant province of Ulster',[80] and in the early 1970s William Craig threatened a loyalist drive for independence to counter Harold Wilson's 'threat of interference' from Westminster.[81]

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[77] Ibid. p. 226.
[78] Op. cit. Cusack and Taylor p. 3.
[79] Op. cit. Aughey and McIlheney p. 193.
[80] Op. cit. Boulton p. 18.
[81] Ibid. p. 80.

The group published a document entitled *Beyond The Religious Divide* which advocated negotiated independence for the province with a new constitution and Bill of Rights. The reasoning behind this initiative appeared to be a genuine attempt to bring the conflict to a close:

> 'Without the evolution of proper politics the people of Northern Ireland will continue to be manipulated by sectarian politicians who make no contribution to the social and economic well-being of the people or the country, but only continue to fan the flames of religious bigotry for self-gain and preservation.'[82]

Bruce argues that the UDA promoted a 'mostly true' new history for loyalists to underpin the group's new policy[83], which goes as follows:

> 'The Gaels were not the first inhabitants of Ireland. They displaced the pictish 'Cruithin', who moved to what is now Argyll. The Cruithin gradually became the Scots, and some of them returned during the Plantation to settle in Ulster. So the present-day Ulster Protestants are not late colonists but the original inhabitants, returning to regain their land from the invading Celts.'[84]

The theme of independence was taken further with the 1987 publication of *Common Sense*, which argued that there would be no majority rule but proportionality at all levels of government.[85] Neither of these two initiatives were taken very seriously and were

[82] *Beyond the Religious Divide*, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.
[83] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 234.
[84] Ibid.
[85] *Common Sense*, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

largely ignored by the major parties. Bruce points out that working class Protestants who are not evangelicals grow up in a world of late 17th century symbols, such as the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the Battle of the Boyne, stating that 'ideas and images that do not draw on that tradition will have an uphill struggle to acceptance.'[86] Arthur Aughey questioned how negotiated independence could be equated with loyalty. The logical response of an exit strategy, he stated, was the classic illusion of the 'third way' – it didn't make sense because it was not part of the endgame for opponents. Aughey continued:

> '[the proposal] was a triumph of logic over practicality. 'Why don't people accept such rationality?' But practicality was the problem. People didn't necessarily see the world their way. So then they'd say politics doesn't work! It would reconfirm their position as a frustrated, misunderstood elite.'[87]

The Common Sense document represented the culmination of the rise of the 'political' element, under John McMichael, in the movement.

Thus, the UDA has had associations with socialism and was the only serious proponent of an independent Northern Ireland. Ultimately, however, its only core and consistent ideological component was the maintenance of the border with the Irish Republic. As one 'senior loyalist' summed up '...the UDA was always the last line of defence between us and an enforced United Ireland.... We can't trust the British Government and we can't

[86] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 235.
[87] Aughey, A., interview.

trust anyone else... Without us being here, it would be so much easier for our country, and our way of life to be taken from us.'[88]

## Structure

Initially the UDA was nothing more than a rather disorganised amalgam of vigilante groups that claimed to be defending their areas from IRA violence. Peter Taylor sums up its structure:

> 'The organization was structured along British army lines, as were both the IRA and the UVF in a compliment to their opponents. The country was divided up into seven 'brigade' areas: North Belfast, East Belfast, South Belfast and West Belfast, South-East Antrim, Londonderry and the Border Counties. They were then organized into battalions, companies, platoons and sections. A steering committee was set up at the top known as the 'Inner Council', consisting of the 'brigadiers' from each of the areas and their 'staffs'.'[89]

As stated above, the very composition of the UDA may have facilitated a more political route through the possibility of representing the loyalist workers and indeed the framework of the different associations of the UDA was often based on the sections of the UWC. McAuley also argues that:

[88] Quoted in op. cit. Cusack and Taylor, p. 24.
[89] Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 83.

'It is important to note that the paramilitary groups, and the subsequent community groups, developed from the same base. Often they relied upon the same people and drew upon the same physical structure.'[90]

Thus, it seems that, notwithstanding major obstacles, like the division of labour ethos that predominated in unionism as a whole (see chapter 9), there would appear to have been potential for a political front to represent the working class or indeed to tap the potential popular support base (see chapter 7). According to Boyne 'in its early days the UDA developed into a mass movement with the capability to bring many thousands of supporters onto the streets.'[91] It is perhaps, therefore, not surprising that there were 'social' and 'political' sides of the UDA. Bruce states that:

'the UDA's development from vigilante groups (and its legality) meant that it drew in a different sort of figure, the trade unionist activist with a broader vision of what the loyalist working class could be doing, [and a] number of men were pushed by their own communities into the role of local representatives and became prominent in the 'social' or 'political' (as distinct from the military) side of the UDA.'[92]

Indeed, the loyalist strike of 1974 was a reflection of the cross-over with working class politics in the organisation's earlier days. The creation of the NUPRG, too, represented the continuing influence of those who had been 'politically' engaged on behalf of the UDA in the early 1970s. The identification with working class solidarity, however, was

[90] Op. cit. McAuley p. 52.
[91] Boyne, S., 'Loyalists: Nemesis From The North', Jane's Intelligence Review, November 1st 1997, p. 32.

not allowed to go unchecked and the swift retribution in 1972 against such leanings served as a reminder of the rift in the organisation between these people and the militarists. If anybody in the organisation exhibited too much 'class consciousness' (as a natural response to feelings of manipulation by constitutional politicians) that risked in any way the charge of being 'republican-like socialists' then the UDA took action. As McAuley states:

> 'Reaction to this developing 'class-conscious' line of argument was rapid, dramatic and bloody. In an intense campaign within the UDA, those in any way associated with this radical line were assassinated or forced to flee the country. The more 'military'- orientated members of the UDA took control.'[93]

And in June 1973 the Ulster Freedom Fighters, 'a more secretive grouping under the umbrella of the UDA', emerged[94], apparently in response to the SDLP's participation in the new Assembly, some of whom were on the UFF's 'death list'. [95] By claiming that the UFF was a separate organisation from the UDA the latter managed to escape proscription until 1992.

Thus, it would be true to say that the UDA was a mass organisation with at times different and contradictory agendas and, because of the ideological divisions and the

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[92] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand pp. 71-2.
[93] Op. cit. McAuley p. 50.
[94] McMichael, G., An Ulster Voice, Roberts Rinehart, Colorado, 1999, p. 6.
[95] Daily Telegraph, 9th July 1973, cited in Conflict Studies, Ulster: Consensus And Coercion, No. 50, October 1974, p. 11.

decentralised structure of the organisation, it was often characterised by factional disputes.[96] As McAuley states:

> 'from its inception the UDA contained a number of different ideological positions. The organisation's history reveals almost continuous factional disputes. Some of this merely reflects the organisation's involvement in 'protection' and the setting-up and management of 'drinking clubs'. But it also reflects the fact that as an organisation with a mass base it contained a criminal element. Other disputes involved individuals and 'power-struggles' aimed at demarcating control in localised areas. Serious disagreements have also arisen from differences over the direction of both military and ideological struggles.'[97]

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the UDA developed a more secretive cell structure for greater security. McAuley describes how the UDA was reorganised again in 1983:

> '[It] marked a more formal separation of the political and military roles. It has been suggested that the organisation was restructured into two major components. Firstly, 'Promotion', which can be sub-divided into 'Education', 'Politics' and 'Public Relations', and secondly 'Protection', which revolves mainly around the activities of the UDF [Ulster Defence Force] and the UFF. The reason for this was not simply an attempt to increase formal bureaucracy. It was, rather, an attempt by

[96] See op. cit. Boulton pp. 153 and 182, for example.
[97] Op. cit. Mc Auley p. 49.

the UDA Council to come to terms with various factions within the organisation.'[98]

From a membership that peaked at around 30 – 40,000 it is believed that the UDA's numerical strength at the end of the 1970s was around 10,000. The figure is now believed to be in the high hundreds[99] whilst it is thought that by 1997 its 'hard core of activists could [have numbered] 200-300'.[100] The group recruited a number of former servicemen but have been less keen to do so after Brian Nelson, a British military intelligence officer who managed to penetrate the organisation (actually becoming the UDA's senior intelligence officer), was exposed as a mole.

During the 1980s the UDA 'became largely associated with corruption and extortion for the personal gain of the leadership.'[101] Indeed, argue Cusack and Taylor, 'it is of some significance that the decline of the UDA in this period was associated both with increasing racketeering and extensive penetration of the UDA by a security force double agent [Nelson] and other agents.'[102] The Cook Report of 1988 exposed the activities of leaders like Eddie Sayers and Jimmy Craig. The fact that 'gangsterism' for personal gain was allowed to develop seemed to be symptomatic of an organisation that was bereft of an alluring political ideology and endowed with a loose decentralised structure.

[98] Ibid. p. 64.
[99] Special Branch source, interview.
[100] Op. cit. Boyne, 'Loyalists: nemesis from the North'.
[101] Op. cit. Cusack and Taylor p. 4
[102] Ibid. p. 5.

After leadership changes, however, the new UDA of 1992 was a far more militant, better organised and 'a highly effective terrorist group.'[103] Yet the group is still widely believed to be heavily engaged in illegal activities, including racketeering, drug dealing, extortion, and club and pub running operations,[104] that appear to be more to do with maintaining individual prestige and fiefdoms than securing political goals. The organisation withdrew support from the peace process in 2001 and its ceasefire was declared at an end by the then Northern Ireland Secretary of State, John Reid, along with that of the LVF, which, in August 2002 was said to be expanding and going through a major reorganisation.[105] The UDA and the LVF are said to have had close links dating back to the friendship between Billy Wright[106], the former leader of the LVF, and Johnny Adair, who emerged as the most well known and formidable UDA leader since his release from prison in the Spring of 2002. After an internal feud, however, Adair and his ally John White were expelled from the organisation. The former was re-imprisoned after breaking the terms of his early release license granted through the Good Friday Agreement. While in jail his Shankhill stronghold was overrun by the rest of the UDA leadership and their supporters in 2003. The current feud is the latest of a number of factional disputes that have characterised the organisation.

## Leadership

The first 'chairman' of the UDA was Charles Harding Smith but when he was arrested in a security force sting operation he was replaced by Jim Anderson 'who took the rank of

[103] Ibid.
[104] See, for example, Murray, A., 'UDA's rackets bring in over £5m', Sunday Life, July 7th 2002.
[105] 'LVF 'tools up' for terrorism', Sunday Life, 26th August 2002.
[106] Wright was murdered by INLA members in prison in December 1997.

'Major-General' as the movement reorganised itself on straight military lines.'[107] However, it was Andy Tyrie that became the most well known leader when he took over in 1974 because he remained at the helm until 1988. Once he had established himself, he increasingly tried to centralise the organisation, and 'in later years he took to appointing the brigadiers'[108], when these had traditionally been chosen by their own areas. He was unsuccessful, however, in replacing the brigade structure with a central command in 1985.[109] The organisation was unable, therefore, to bring about the strict, disciplined structure that the IRA had achieved.

At the beginning of the 1980s, although Tyrie remained in position, there were some leadership changes. Barr and Chicken withdrew from the NUPRG to be replaced by John McMichael (who had criticised their policy), as the political spokesman for the UDA. The change was reflected in the formation of the new ULDP in 1981. McMichael's investigations into racketeering in the organisation ended abruptly when he was blown up by a car bomb in December 1987. Although he was killed by the IRA it is believed that he may have been set up by members of his own organisation. After the departure of Tyrie not only did the personnel change but so did the structure of the leadership. Instead of having a chairman in overall charge of the organisation there was to be a collective leadership. This 'Inner Council', however, soon gained a reputation for corruption and resting on its laurels. Cusack and Taylor describe its inadequacies:

> 'During 1980-89 the old 'Inner Council' leadership appears to have been very suspect in terms of political motivation, and some of the individuals in power

[107] Op. cit. Boulton p. 161.
[108] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 252.

during the late 1970s and early 1980s significantly directed the organisation away from its original ideological and political objectives. Either by accident or by design, a situation emerged where the non-political activities continued, were condoned by the leadership and assumed exaggerated importance and influence. In this context, gangsterism and corruption flourished under the guidance and direction of UDA leaders such as Craig, Payne and their allies.'[110]

By the end of the decade, however, this leadership was displaced by a new hardline one.[111] The allegations of the Cook Report had been extremely embarrassing for the UDA.[112] So too was the whole Nelson affair[113] and it prompted the so-called 'Outer Council' to take over the organisation. These new leaders originated from the Ulster Defence Force:

'the UDA almost incidentally developed a co-ordinated second tier of management. At the start of the 1980s the UDA Chairman, Andy Tyrie, and John McMichael, who was the South Belfast brigadier and overall military commander, had set up a recruitment and training programme, which included some ideological instruction, as well as survival and combat training in isolated rural areas in Ulster. As well as providing a well-trained element and directing and sustaining the motivation of younger members, the UDF initiative was also the

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Op. cit. Cusack and Taylor p. 25.
[111] See McKittrick, D., ' 'Young Turks' are blamed for rise in loyalist violence', The Independent, August 11th 1992.
[112] The Cook Report (Central Television, Summer 1988) linked many of its leading members with extortion and racketeering.
[113] The organisation was penetrated by a British army agent (from the Force Research Unit) by the name of Brian Nelson (the Stevens Inquiry followed).

first time that the previously separate members of the UDA's six self-styled brigades met regularly.'[114]

McAuley also refers to the formation of the UDF which 'came into existence as a 'reserve army' to be used in a 'domesday (sic) situation''.[115] It is through participation in the UDF, argue Cusack and Taylor, that many members of the UDA's 'Outer Council' came together and it was this 'second tier leadership', with 'around 30 members, about five from each of the UDA's six brigade areas', that came to the fore as the new leadership at the end of the 1980s, after the old one had been discredited. Following Adair's failed attempt at taking over the organisation in 2002, the UDA continues to be run by a collective leadership that sits on the Inner Council.

# The UVF

## Ideology

Unlike the UDA, the UVF does have a more tangible history to draw upon. Not only does it proudly remember Carson's 1912 UVF force (with 200,000 members[116]) that was formed in response to the Home Rule Movement but it has also drawn much legitimacy from Ulster's contribution to the British war effort and the sacrifices of the 36th (Ulster) division at the Somme in 1916. The First World War put an end to the threat of loyalist rebellion and after partition was conceded the UVF units became 'a peace-keeping

[114] Op. cit. Cusack and Taylor p. 9.
[115] Op. cit. McAuley p. 64.
[116] Op. cit. Bruce, 'The Problems of Pro State Terrorism', p. 67.

vigilante movement' and were later incorporated into the B Special Constabulary.[117] The modern UVF, a very different type of organisation, came about because of the perceived threat from an apparently resurfacing IRA in 1966 – the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising. The Belfast Newsletter reported that 'the Northern Ireland government is enquiring into reports that the UVF is being re-formed in county Tyrone to oppose IRA and Republican plans to hold parades at Easter.'[118]

The UVF was also formed to oppose O'Neill's reforms that its members believed threatened the constitutional status of the province, and it put itself on standby in case of an 'imposed solution' from Westminster, especially after the secret talks between the government and the IRA in 1972. But generally, the UVF's ideology indicates further how bereft loyalists were of a coherent dogma. Bruce argues that beyond the maintenance of the Border the group didn't really have one, summed up by this passage from a 'senior activist':

> 'We never had an overall goal. I never really knew what I was fighting for. If you was a journalist or that I might come out with some wee thing but I never really knew. A journalist would phone up and ask what we were thinking. We'd take down some book and take a few sentences out and jumble them up and give it to him as our policy.'[119]

As Bruce states it wasn't that UVF members were less bright than their republican counterparts but there was little scope for the development of political policy 'because

[117] Ibid.
[118] Op. cit. Boulton p. 33.

there were already better-established political groups that represented many of the views held by UVF members.'[120] Moreover, the division of labour ethos (see chapter 9) meant that paramilitaries should stick to violence and politicians to politics. The UVF's raison d'etre can be summed up, then, as a response to the IRA[121], to protect the constitutional position of the province and to fight against any attempts at an imposed solution.

Beyond this there were other ideological strands that were more about individual leanings than policy and reflected the multifarious nature of the organisation. Bruce states that when the only thing that UVF members had in common was that they had joined the UVF there was bound to be a plethora of different views and this was perhaps inevitable when one considers that the group sought to formulate policy after it was formed rather than beforehand.[122] There wasn't even a unified approach on relations with Westminster:

> 'John McKeague, the founder and leader of the RHC [Red Hand Commando] (soon to be fully merged with the UVF), was in favour of a sovereign Ulster government in a federal United Kingdom but his second-in-command shared Gibson's dislike for any form of independence. Beyond the constitutional issues there was even less agreement. At times, the UVF of Spence sounded socialist, and in another country many of its members would have been Labour men. At others, especially if accused of communism, it sounded rabidly right wing. But none of this should be surprising when one remembers that what UVF members had in common was that they had joined the UVF. Although they were recruited

[119] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 123.
[120] Ibid.
[121] See ibid. p. 144.
[122] Ibid. p.121.

> from a fairly narrow class background, some were rural and some were urban. Although few were committed evangelicals, some were more religious than others. Some were skilled well-paid workers and others were long-term unemployed. Some were thoughtful planners and others were hoodlums. Why should such a variety of people agree on policies beyond the simple constitutional issue?'[123]

Nevertheless, Henry Patterson argues that, in comparison to the UDA, the UVF were more likely to have a tendency for political pretensions because they were in a better position to develop a political party.[124] Part of the explanation, he argues, was that, because of the violence after 1969, some of the old labour supporters found themselves in the UVF – and it is through this that some of the origins of PUP ideology can be found, along with the belief that mainstream unionism had let down working class unionism.[125]

As with republicans it was the prisons that were to provide an extra dimension to the UVF's political thought. Billy Mitchell, a UVF member noted,

> 'Unfortunately in 1974 we didn't have a strategy and we didn't have a political philosophy ... We had a gut feeling that the politicians weren't going to resolve it, that only the paramilitaries could stop the violence and that there had to be some form of compromise where we could accommodate each other's aspirations. We

[123] Ibid. p.124.
[124] Patterson, H., interview.
[125] Ibid.

didn't have a strategy for doing it then. Perhaps we had to go to gaol to find one.'[126]

Indeed, Garland in his article on the UVF devotes a whole section to the influence of prison life on UVF prisoners, under the heading 'Prison becomes a university'.[127] Prisons for both the republican and loyalist groups were periods of analysing the self and the environment and plotting a course thereafter. With republicans it was what is known as the Long War, with loyalists it was their awareness of working class status and unionist 'exploitation' – and it was the changing relationship with constitutional unionism that lay at the heart of the use of the loyalist political fronts. Spence stated that 'the men were ready, not for indoctrination, but to be set in pursuit not only of truth but of some form of political ideology.'[128]

It wasn't just the realisation that working class loyalists had been used by 'respectable' politicians when it suited them and ditched when it didn't that the tedium of prison life had facilitated. It was also the environment where men like Gusty Spence were exposed to republican prisoners and indeed cooperated with them. Spence had even developed a friendship with an Official IRA member. With time to reflect and through such associations he was to take an increasingly socialist line and his influence was borne out in a UVF statement that claimed that 'the w/class people of whatever creed are the real inheritors of peace and prosperity'.[129]

[126] Mitchell, 'Billy', quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists, p. 123.
[127] Op. cit. Garland p. 17.
[128] Spence, G., quoted in op. cit. Garland p. 18.
[129] UVF statement, ibid. p.21.

Spence's political ideology had also led to a more conciliatory approach as far as violence was concerned. His reaction, he says, to the Dublin and Monaghan bombs, which effectively ended the UVF ceasefire, was 'one of shock and horror'.[130] His influence from prison could not prevent the emergence of the new hardline UVF leadership at this time. Nevertheless, states Taylor, Spence more than anybody sowed the seeds that were to lead to the creation of the Progressive Unionist Party and without the experience in Long Kesh it is unlikely that such a political cadre of David Ervine, Billy Hutchinson, William Smith and Gusty Spence himself, who were all to play 'vital'roles up to the Good Friday Agreement, would have emerged.[131]

## Structure

In comparison to the UDA the UVF is a highly secretive organisation and details of its structure and leadership are hard to come by. The group was formed in early 1966 on the lower Shankhill.[132] In its early days it wasn't a clear-cut organisation with confusion at times between it and Noel Doherty's Ulster Protestant Volunteer Divisions[133] and overlap with the Shankhill Defence Association.[134] The UVF also had links with another Protestant paramilitary organisation called Tara, led by evangelical Christians, which was under the leadership of William McGrath.[135] The association came to an end, however, when apparently 'evidence was received in 1971 of McGrath's homosexual abuse of young men.'[136]

[130] Spence quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 139.
[131] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 141.
[132] Op. cit. Boulton p. 36.
[133] See ibid. pp. 45 and 108.
[134] See ibid. p. 115.
[135] Op. cit. Garland p. 10.

With its leader in prison by 1971 the UVF organisation:

> 'had almost ceased to exist as a co-ordinated force. Occasional acts of violence by ad hoc groups of militants were done in its name, and in the bars of the Shankhill men made brave plans over beer. But in July 1971 there was probably no more than a score of active UVF men, most of them long-time associates of Gusty Spence.'[137]

The republican response to internment soon changed the situation and when Spence was 'kidnapped' by his former colleagues in 1972 'it was soon clear that, back in action, he was presiding over a substantial UVF revival. The force's structure of 'divisions', 'companies' and 'battalions' was formalised for the first time.'[138] Bruce states that, unlike the UDA, and 'with one or two exceptions, the UVF was thoroughly 'military' and its Volunteers shared only a desire to save Ulster from republicans and a liking for action.[139] Boyne outlines its structure:

> 'The controlling body of the UVF is the Military Command, which is assisted by a headquarters staff including an internal security unit. Unlike the UDA's Inner Council, the UVF Military Command is not composed of representatives of the brigades below. Although highly secretive, the UVF is regarded by some analysts

[136] Ibid. p.11.
[137] Op. cit. Boulton p. 144.
[138] Ibid. p. 173.
[139] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand, p. 226.

as having a loose structure: a type of federal system comprising a collection of semi-autonomous gangs, or cells.'[140]

There doesn't appear to be much consensus as to how centralised the UVF has been. A 'loose structure' with a 'federal system' of 'semi-autonomous gangs' implies that it is not that centralised and Bruce argues below that, like the UDA, the UVF has never managed to centralise its organisation. Yet, another commentator suggests 'the UVF has traditionally had a tightly centralised command structure'.[141] David Ervine stated that whereas the UDA's brigades are virtually autonomous the UVF is more tied together although that has meant that there are more internal stresses.[142] Thus, it would appear that the UVF is at least more centralised than the UDA. Certainly the fact that the UVF has been a more disciplined and controlled organisation would suggest this. Like the UDA, the UVF also decided to reorganise in 1979, devising 'a cell system where smaller units were engaged in specific roles and operations. The theory was that members of one cell would not be privy to what another cell was doing and so would be unable to tell the police.'[143]

## Leadership

Gusty Spence was widely thought to be the leader and mentor for the early UVF although he used the 'official' pseudonym of Colonel William Johnston. His increasing socialist and anti-sectarian stance was not to the liking of some within, however, and the end of

[140] Op. cit. Boyne, 'Loyalists: nemesis from the North'.
[141] O'Farrell, J., 'Loyalists rearming for battle to come', Scotland on Sunday, 12th May 2002.
[142] David Ervine, interview.

the UVF's ceasefire in 1974 represented the take over of a hardline leadership. Although the success of the UWC strike led to the formation of the VPP, when this failed a 'policy re-think' (in December 1974) emphasised a commitment to 'military policies' and 'the UVF would 'seek to expose the errors of doctrinaire Socialism and to expose the myth of the supposed class struggle.'[144] The Sunday News commented: 'Political observers see this attitude as being the result of a take-over of the leadership by right-wing members of the UVF.'[145]

A coup was said to have taken place in the organisation in 1975 when ''a moderate' leadership managed to take over, which 'unreservedly condemned sectarian murders on the grounds that the war was not being conducted against people because of their religious beliefs.'[146] Bruce confirms that 'the brigade staff who had been in control for a year was replaced by a group of more experienced, older men who were a little more political.'[147]

In general, the identity of the UVF leadership has remained secret. When the Combined Loyalist Military Command announced its ceasefires in 1994, while PUP members sat alongside Gusty Spence, 'the military commanders who had engaged in the critical dialogue with Archbishop Eames, and had made the ceasefire possible, chose not to stand in the spotlight.'[148]

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[143] Cusack, J., and McDonald, H., UVF, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, pp. 193-4.
[144] Sunday News, December 1st 1974, quoted in op. cit. Garland p. 35.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Quoted in op. cit. Garland p. 35.
[147] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 175.
[148] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 233.

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To sum up it would appear that the UDA, unlike the IRA, has not been able to centralise its organisation. It would seem that the UVF is centralised to a degree but certainly not as much as the IRA, given that Bruce argues that, like the UDA, the UVF has been unable to do this:

> 'it is hard not to be struck by the weak and often irrational internal discipline of the loyalist paramilitaries. Disagreements might lead to someone being shot in the head, but, as often as not, serious breaches of discipline would go unpunished. In the 1970s UDA brigadiers went accompanied by bodyguards to protect them, not from the IRA but from other brigadiers..... It seems no accident that the UDA and UVF have never managed to centralize their organizations. They remain local area groups only loosely affiliated to a central structure. Although it has now been a company of the UDA for twenty years, the WDA still uses its own name first and UDA second on floral tributes.'[149]

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the ideologies, traditions, structures and leaderships of the case studies. The IRA has had a powerful nationalist dogma that has been accompanied by an uncompromising physical force tradition, a belief that politics was the 'domain of the unprincipled' and, at different times, an adherence to republican socialism. As it has seen

[149] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand, pp. 285-6.

the administrations of Leinster House, Stormont (when it has existed) and Westminster as illegitimate on the island it has also held to a deeply embedded tradition of abstention from these institutions. It has also traditionally declared an indifference to its minority status and public opinion.

This chapter has argued, however, that the IRA has in fact been more pragmatic than the intransigence of its ideology might suggest for historically the group *has* been involved with the 'illegitimate' political domain and popular support *has* been important to the Irish republican struggle. Traditionally, as noted earlier, the fault line within the IRA has been between those who have wanted to associate themselves with left wing politics and who wished to revitalise the tradition of republican socialism, and those who saw any activity that did not entail the use of physical force for the national cause as an unnecessary diversion. More latterly the desire to mobilise popular support and to become further engaged in politics has not emanated from Marxist dogma but from the republican leadership's aim of increasing Sinn Fein's mandate both in the Irish Republic[150] and Northern Ireland in an effort to achieve Irish unification by more political means.[151] This more 'political' approach that emerged in the 1980s, and the dropping of abstention from the Irish Dail in 1986, and from Stormont through the new political dispensation after 1998, has been fundamental in bringing about the greater utility of Sinn Fein as the group's political front.

While certain aspects of IRA ideology may have been watered down to facilitate political involvement, most notably through the ending of the policy of abstention from the Irish

[150] And thereby end its policy of abstention from the Irish Dail in 1986.
[151] Although at the time of writing the threat of violence remains.

Dail and Sinn Fein's full participation in the Stormont executive and assembly that were created by the Good Friday Agreement, the group's powerful anti-state ideology has facilitated a disciplined and highly centralised structure which has increased the likelihood that a political front could be used effectively under the tight control of the IRA leadership, whether as a tactical or propaganda device, or as an electoral tool. It is logical that the disciplined and tight hierarchical lines of control from the Army Council to the General Headquarters, to the two commands (Southern and Northern), to the Brigades, and then to the Active Service Units has been replicated in the Army Council's relationship with the political front, which has therefore been used more effectively as a result (in comparison to the loyalist political fronts). The next chapter will assess more closely the impact that the ideology and organisational structure of the group has had on the nature of the relationship between it and its political front, and on the role of the front.

Perhaps the most significant 'internal' factor vis a vis the greater utility of Sinn Fein has been the change in leadership that took place within the IRA during the 1970s and 80s. It was Gerry Adams and the Northern leadership that recognised the limitations of a purely militaristic approach and this in turn led to the use of the political front in new and innovative ways. As Sinn Fein councillor Michael Browne put it the new leadership was able to deal with the evolving situation. It was Adams that recognised that a short war was no longer a realistic aspiration and so the struggle was widened to all fronts while the 'army' was reorganised into a cell structure to combat the use of informers. Since the electoral success of Sands it has been Adams that has developed the IRA's electoral strategy both North and South. The survival of this leadership to this day has been fundamental in ensuring that the political front has continued to play a prominent role in mainstream republican strategy, and indeed it may even have eclipsed the IRA itself

through the current peace process, although at the time of writing the process remains stalled.

Despite the physical force and abstentionist traditions of Irish republicanism that, it could be argued, have limited the role of the political front as an electoral tool, the IRA's ideology, structure and especially its leadership are all internal factors that have helped to facilitate the effective and greater utilisation of Sinn Fein. This has been important in enabling the group to use its political front when the external environment may have demanded it – such as popular support (chapter 7), the type of state response (chapter 8) and other factors in the external environment (such as the hunger strikes or United States influence [chapter 9]).

As far as the two loyalist case studies are concerned they do not have such a potent ideology. That is because they are pro-state groups and have, ostensibly at least, been fighting for something that already exists. Being pro-state has also increased the likelihood that those who wanted 'action' or a military career would join the British army or the police force and that those with political talent would realise their potential in one of the unionist parties, leaving only the remnants for the loyalist paramilitaries. The contradiction of breaking the law of the state that one is trying to uphold in the midst of a 'law abiding' community (see chapter 9) that also seeks to maintain the status quo underlines the frailty of the loyalist groups' dogma. With an ideology represented by other hardline unionist entities it has been that much easier for the loyalist groups to degenerate into organised criminal empires. The lack of an alluring ideology, it is argued, has therefore had a direct bearing on the structures of the two groups which are not as

centralised or as disciplined as the IRA, particularly in the case of the Ulster Defence Association.

Moreover, the range of state alternatives, both in security and politics, has meant that the loyalist groups have been less likely to develop a leadership that could tightly centralise and control their organisations, let alone one with the ability to develop an effective political strategy. Chapter 5 will outline the impact of the two groups' ideology and structures on the nature of the relationship between the groups and their political fronts, and on the roles of the latter. As with the case of the IRA it is important to acknowledge these internal impediments on the loyalist side when considering the impact of the external environment on the utility of the two groups' political fronts.

# Chapter 5 - The Impact Of Ideology And Structure On The Relationship Between Terrorist Organisations And Their Political Fronts, And On Their Role

## The IRA

The IRA's uncomplicated and powerful ideology has underpinned its rigid, well organised and centralised structure. Discipline, unity and undivided loyalty to the leadership are characteristics that have helped to give the organisation its longevity. There have been splits (in 1986 and 1997) but, in general, so tightly controlled has the group been, that the republican movement has usually been able to present a united front.[1] These characteristics are bound to have had an impact on the nature of the relationship between the IRA and Sinn Fein and therefore on the role of the political front.

Although the political front does not form part of the formal structure of the organisation, it has nevertheless been under the direct control of the Army Council. Thus, the discipline and centralised nature of the IRA is replicated in the strict control that the IRA leadership has exerted over its political front. This has been managed by the dual membership that has existed between the organisation and its political front at leadership level.

[1] This is not to say that Irish republican terrorism in general has not been fractious, most notably in the 1970s and 80s through the emergence of splinter groups such as the Irish People's Liberation Organisation and the Irish National Liberation Army.

From 1949, when Sinn Fein was 'infiltrated' and the IRA '[took] control' of the organisation, 'electing a member of the Army Council, Patrick McLogan, as their new President'[2], Sinn Fein has indeed been inextricably linked to the IRA. Examples of this dual membership are hard to come by but not, argues Peter Taylor, because they do not exist but because they are seldom brought to light.[3] It is not difficult to find cases where 'former terrorists' are members of Sinn Fein but it is less easy to find evidence of simultaneous membership in both organisations. Andrew Silke, though, in his article on paramilitary vigilantism, explains how the Sinn Fein 'advice centres' of the 1970s became known as 'Provo Police Stations' run by Sinn Fein 'Civil Administration Officers'.[4] The CAO was:

> 'habitually also a member of the IRA, and indeed was often a relatively senior figure in the local chain of command. The dual membership, an officer of an executive branch of Sinn Fein, as well as a member of the IRA, was – and is – reflected in the dual responsibilities for the post of Civil Administration Officer.'[5]

Taylor argues that the case of Martin McCaughey illustrates the interchangeability between the IRA and Sinn Fein in a way that few cases do. McCaughey became a Sinn Fein councillor despite the fact that 'his activities were more IRA than Sinn Fein.'[6] Ken Fitzgerald, who played a leading role in the IRA's anti-drugs campaigns in Dublin in the

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[2] Bishop, P., and Mallie, E., The Provisional IRA, London: Corgi, 1992, p. 39. After spending the 1930s and 40s in the wilderness the link between the IRA and Sinn Fein was reestablished in the late 1940s.
[3] Taylor, P., Provos, The IRA And Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997, p. 278.
[4] Silke, A., 'Rebel's Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the IRA, Sinn Fein and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 11, No.1, pp. 72-3.
[5] Ibid. pp 72-3. The CAO was responsible for sanctioning vigilante activity as well as 'frequently being the Officer Commanding (OC) for the IRA's Internal Security for the local units.'
[6] Op. cit. Taylor p. 278.

1990s, was a Sinn Fein candidate in the last local elections, but after he was convicted he claimed membership of the IRA and secured a prison transfer.[7] After the 2001 Westminster elections Sinn Fein councillor Martin O'Muilleoir let slip that 'the IRA came out of this election stronger'.[8] Conor Claxton, one of the guilty men in the Florida gun running trial admitted in court that he was an international representative for both the IRA and Sinn Fein.[9]

In May 2001 Michael Noonan, the former leader of the Irish Fine Gael party, said of the IRA and Sinn Fein that 'dual membership [has been] the norm rather than the exception, particularly at the highest level.'[10] A leaked document made available to the Sunday Times in March 2001, which was apparently 'verified by senior sources in the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Irish police', claimed to know the identities of the Army Council members, three of which were McGuinness, Adams and Martin Ferris, all key Sinn Fein figures.[11] In fact it has been rumoured that McGuinness took over the leadership of the Army Council in September 2001.[12] When one also considers that one hardline member, Brian Keenan, is apparently seriously ill, then it would appear that Sinn Fein is fast becoming the Army Council.[13] Thus, in the unlikely event that the party were to become the largest all-Ireland party in a united Ireland then it is possible that, through Sinn Fein, the Army Council could indeed form the government of a united Republic, and

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[7] Hennessey, M., 'SF aims for breakthrough after years of preparing', Irish Times, July 30th 2001.
[8] Moriarty, G., 'New electoral map displays a stark contrast', Irish Times, June 11th 2001.
[9] Carroll, J., 'I was in IRA, gun accused tells court', Irish Times, 1st June 2000.
[10] Noonan, M., quoted in 'Ahern says his view of Sinn Fein remains the same', Irish Times, May 3rd 2001.
[11] Clarke, L., 'Leaked list names the men who run the IRA', Sunday Times, March 25th 2001.
[12] See, for example, Cowan R., and Boycott, O., 'Sinn Fein offers hope on IRA arms stockpile', The Guardian, October 8th 2001.
[13] News reports state that Keenan is suffering from cancer (such as Clarke, L, 'Cancer may force Keenan to quit top IRA post', The Sunday Times, September 1st 2002).

inherit the legacy of the 1919 Dail, thereby fulfilling a part of its ideology that many have assumed the organisation has lost sight of for practical reasons.

However much one speculates as to who is and who isn't on the IRA Army Council the evidence of cross membership between the two organisations is compelling – and this was brought home when Cuba's 'Sinn Fein representative', Niall Connolly, was one of three IRA men caught training the Marxist revolutionary group FARC in August 2001.[14] Connolly was also believed to be part of a team helping to organise Gerry Adams' trip to Cuba.[15]

What is equally clear is that, at least until the recent apparent change in the internal dynamics of the Army Council, the IRA was the senior partner in the relationship – evident in the fact that 'Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein's two leading members, are said to have ferried messages back to the IRA leaders during the [July 2001] talks.'[16] And this was not the first time that Army Council members had been present in make or break negotiations.[17] The very fact that the British and Irish governments and the Northern Irish political parties all waited nervously for the terrorist group's response to the governments' blueprint for the future of the province showed clearly that the real power within the republican movement was in the organisation's Army Council.

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[14] Ford R., and Evans, M., 'Arrested IRA man 'is Sinn Fein Cuba link'', The Times, August 16th 2001.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Watt, N., 'Optimism grows over Ulster deal', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , July 21st 2001.
[17] See Irish Independent quote in Brown, D., 'What the Irish papers say', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , July 9th 2001.

If one refers to the diagram of the IRA's Command and Functional Structure in Horgan and Taylor's article[18] it might therefore be appropriate to include Sinn Fein as a direct link under the Army Council to which it has reported through the dual membership of both leaderships.[19] This would make clear that rather than the 'moderate half' of the movement, or a separate political party, Sinn Fein has in fact been for most of its life a tactical device under the direct control of the IRA Army Council. This has meant that at least until the Autumn of 2001 Sinn Fein has been a tightly controlled instrument of the IRA leadership and its role as a political front has therefore been decided and delegated according to the tactical demands of the movement at the time. The IRA's powerful ideology and tight organisational structure has instilled loyalty and discipline in the ranks and the same has gone for Sinn Fein in its deference and loyalty to the group's leadership.

Thus, it would be a mistake to view Sinn Fein as an alternative to the armed struggle. It has very much been part of the strategy of ridding the province of the British through the use of violence or the threat of violence. Once it is understood that Sinn Fein has, at least until very recently, been a tactical device controlled by the Army Council rather than the 'moderate half' of the movement, it is then possible to fully appreciate the role of the IRA's political front.

[18] Horgan, J., and Taylor, M., 'The Provisional Irish Republican Army: Command And Functional Structure', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 9, Autumn 1997, No. 3., p. 26.
[19] Of course the IRA would not place Sinn Fein in any such structure as it would give the lie to their claims that the IRA and Sinn Fein are completely separate organisations.

# The Loyalist Groups

There are many obstacles to the establishment of a loyalist political front that the anti-state IRA does not face. While the more significant of these are to be found in chapter 9, the type of ideology and structure of the two groups and the nature of the relationship between the paramilitary organisations and their political fronts have also affected the utility of the latter. In the case of the IRA and Sinn Fein it is clear that its more potent ideology, strict discipline and centralised structure has ensured that Sinn Fein, until 2001 at least, was directly under the control of the Army Council. With a somewhat weaker ideology by comparison and less centralised structures, it has been less likely that the UDA and the UVF would establish a political front that could be centrally controlled as a tactical device.

There is another key organisational difference between the loyalist groups and the IRA vis a vis their political fronts that might be important in explaining the different roles of the UDP and the PUP on the one hand, and Sinn Fein on the other. Andrew White noted that, aside from the division of labour ethos that has existed in unionism between the politicians and the paramilitaries, that this same ethos has been replicated between the loyalist paramilitary groups and the UDP and the PUP. In other words, unlike the interconnecting role of Sinn Fein with the IRA in overall republican strategy, the political fronts of the loyalist groups were more akin to separate layers. Thus, it would appear that the political fronts on the loyalist side are more detached from their paramilitary groups. White states that 'the paramilitaries have been almost wholly intent with concentrating on

the 'military' part of the campaign, whilst letting the PUP and UDP set their political agenda. Any political pronouncements by the paramilitaries have been mere repetitions of the policies of those parties.'[20]

There are varying accounts as to the true nature of the relationship between the loyalist groups and their political fronts. Some argue that, in comparison to the IRA and Sinn Fein, and in keeping with the 'division of labour', there is more detachment from the loyalist groups and their political fronts, in which case the term 'front' may not always be appropriate. Gary McMichael, for example, states in *Ulster Voice*, that it was not factually correct to label the UDP as the UDA's political 'wing'.[21] Yet Arthur Aughey asserted that there is definitely dual membership at leadership level between the loyalist groups and their political parties. He also stated that loyalism is personal and fragmented, that they were 'a bunch of individuals' at leadership level and that organisation hasn't really existed.[22]

## The UDA/Political Front Relationship

The UDA's mass membership in the early 1970s, its associations with working class organisations, its internal divisions between those that wanted to develop 'class conscious' political activity and the militarists, and its decentralised structure were all to have an impact on the nature of the relationship between the group and its first political front, the NUPRG. Initially none of its members were active on the military side of the

[20] White A., 'The Development of Working Class Loyalist Conflict (1985-95) and the Rise of the PUP and the UDP', MA Dissertation, Queen's University, Belfast, August 1995, p. 58.

organisation with men like Barr and Chicken representing the old affiliations with working class organisations. This meant that, although the NUPRG was an offshoot of the UDA and its members were also UDA members, there was no direct involvement or dual membership with the Inner Council of the group or the UFF. The front, therefore, while an offshoot of the organisation which was there to give Andy Tyrie political guidance, was separate from the 'fighting machine'. The political front did not resemble a political party because it did not set out to create a political platform, but it was more of a think tank, from which the first ideas of negotiated independence evolved.

The composition and the character of the political front was to change, however, when John McMichael, who was 'responsible for planning and approving many of the UFF's assassinations', became the secretary of the NUPRG. What is interesting is that, according to Bruce, he appears to have been something of a 'minder'.[23] This would appear to represent an attempt by the military side of the organisation to exercise control over the think tank and to make sure that no political initiatives were embarked upon that would be detrimental to the overall aims of the organisation. It seems that this view was confirmed by the marginalisation of Barr and Chicken and the elevation of McMichael as the UDA's 'chief political spokesman'.[24]

A new political front emerged in 1981 that represented the change of personnel called the Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party (ULDP). Thus, a political party was formed that had at

[21] McMichael, G., An Ulster Voice, Roberts Rinehart, Colorado, 1999, p. 35.
[22] Aughey, A., interview.
[23] Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 232.
[24] Ibid. p. 233.

its apex dual membership with the military leadership of the UDA. Gary McMichael confirms this (as well as the subordinate status the party had in relation to the terrorist organisation) stating that 'the UDA had created the ULDP merely as an extension of itself.'[25] His father, who was reputed to be the leader of the UFF, was at the same time leader of the new party.

Due to the fragmented nature of the organisation, however, the party did not command widespread support within the UDA. Indeed, while McMichael sought to give the organisation a political direction others in the organisation were busy lining their own pockets and gaining the group the reputation as a bunch of corrupt racketeers. Meanwhile Barr and Chicken 'knew that the unpopularity of the UDA would prevent those associated with it winning elections; their ideas could only succeed if taken up by another party.'[26] This seemed to be borne out by Bruce's assertion that the ULDP's political fortunes and the UDA's claims to be taken seriously as a constitutional political force were undermined by its members' perpetration of violence in protests against the Anglo-Irish accord.[27]

McMichael's assassination abruptly ended the UDA's political initiatives. Although he was murdered by the IRA he was apparently set up by members of his own organisation, who feared that his political ambitions and attempts to 'clean up' the organisation's image would impact on their illegal sources of income. Not long afterwards in 1988 his son, Gary McMichael, and his colleagues:

[25] Op. cit. McMichael p. 32.
[26] Op. cit. Bruce p. 233.
[27] Ibid. p. 242.

'reformed the ULDP as an independent political party. Naturally, some of the activists were former or current members of the UDA, but the objective was to create a political movement that was open and attractive to any person who supported our policies and aims.'[28]

Peter Taylor argues that:

'the UDP's[29] relationship with the UDA 'was not umbilical like that of Sinn Fein to the IRA or the PUP's to the UVF[30], as [Davey] Adams[31] explained. 'The relationship is very much a voluntary one in terms of when the UDA leadership want political analysis from us. When they ask for our view on any given situation, then we will provide it, but we don't have a direct input as such in determining UDA and UFF policy. What we do is if we are invited, we go and make arguments from our position. But at the end of the day it's for the leadership of that organization to decide whether they accept our position or whether they don't.'[32]

As noted above, Gary McMichael concurs, stating that the labelling of the re-formed ULDP and then the UDP as the UDA's 'political wing' by the media was 'factually untrue'. This viewpoint would imply that the UDP was more autonomous from the terrorist organisation than its predecessors. Nevertheless, the fact that the UDP was to

[28] Op. cit. McMichael p. 33.
[29] The Ulster Loyalist Democratic Party's name was changed to the Ulster Democratic Party.
[30] The nature of the relationship between the UVF and the PUP will be discussed below.
[31] A former leader of the UDP.
[32] Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 215.

dissolve because Gary McMichael felt that he 'could no longer represent the UDA on matters relating to the Good Friday Agreement' suggests that the party's whole raison d'etre was to speak for the paramilitary organisation, and that it was therefore indeed the UDA's political front.[33] This subordinate status of the party seems to be confirmed when leading members of the UDP 'were bluntly told to 'cool it'' over the fast pace of the peace process.[34] To recall Aughey's view that loyalism has been about 'a bunch of individuals', often fragmented with little organisation, perhaps suggests that, while it seems that McMichael had no formal position on the Inner Council of the UDA or in the UFF, he was nevertheless informally involved and positioned as the group's political representative.

After support for the UDP peaked in the negotiations that followed the announcement of the CLMC ceasefire,[35] it performed disappointingly in the Assembly elections following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Then the cracks inherent in the various elements of the UDA and its decentralised structure spelt the end for the party:

> 'Electoral failure strengthened those forces within the UDA who were unhappy with the political direction the peace process was taking. The UDA, never as well organized as the Ulster Volunteer Force, began to fragment. A faction under Johnny Adair wanted to resume violence while using the UDA's resources to run a profitable drug-smuggling operation. Several 'brigades' threatened to go independent ... In spite of the fact that the UDA pioneered the political route for

[33] BBC News, 'Loyalist party 'left with little option'', website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news , 28th November 2001.
[34] Campbell, J., 'Loyalist Bosses Warn On Fast Paced Peace Process', Sunday World, January 8th 1995.

loyalist paramilitaries, the old sectarian and criminal element within its ranks proved too strong ... In the end, the UDP manifested all the contradictions that were inherent within the UDA from the start – a populism that attempted to reach out to Catholics coexisted with a bitter sectarianism, and men who aspired to real politics stood alongside pure criminals.'[36]

In 2002 a new political front, the Ulster Political Research Group, was formed under the leadership of John White, apparently 'to give political analysis to the ... Ulster Defence Association'.[37] Given White's close association with Adair it might be reasonable to assume that the front represented just the latter's West Belfast C Company Brigade and not the UDA as a whole. The subsequent fallout within the group has meant that the political front has changed hands and is now being controlled by the mainstream of the UDA which, through the UPRG, announced a twelve month ceasefire in March 2003.

## The Impact of Ideology and Structure on the Role of the UDA's Political Fronts

This chapter argues that the lack of an alluring ideology and the type of organisational structure of the UDA has impacted on the nature of the relationship between the group and its political fronts. This in turn has had an effect on the type of role that these fronts have had. While the UDA's pro-state nature and the 'division of labour' ethos within unionism (see chapter 9) represent more significant obstacles to their utility, it is argued

[35] McMichael won 16,715 votes during the forum elections.
[36] Holland, J., 'Dark side's ascendance seals fate of the UDP', Irish Echo Online, website: http://www.irishecho.com , 12th – 18th December 2001.

that the fragmented and decentralised nature of the group (partly because of its weak ideology) has also had a negative impact in this regard. One manifestation of the structure of the UDA has been the space it has given for racketeering and corruption to flourish which has had a detrimental effect on the utility of the group's political fronts, especially when they have been used as a conduit for political initiatives or as political parties fighting elections (see chapter 6).

The point has been argued above that the looser structure of the UDA has facilitated more illicit activity for personal gain. Therefore it would appear in this case that the political goal is diluted and that any use of a political front would be less likely for two reasons. Firstly personal gain has become more important than the political goal with some leaders and secondly the continuing political conflict has served as a cover for criminal enterprises. In this case such profiteers would see the establishment of a political front that represented a sign of moderation as a threat to their illegal empires. The peace process (that the UDA was involved with through the UDP until 2001), for example, has meant that paramilitary organised crime has increasingly come under the spotlight as the political conflict recedes.[38] Moreover, if the UDA has had the image of a bunch of corrupt gangsters (and they appeared to be seen as such in the 1980s) then what chance for a political front at the ballot box? As Cusack and Taylor argue 'the loyalist terrorist, if recognised at all, is seen as being synonymous with a gangster, and is rarely given the political 'legitimacy' and 'status' his republican counterpart attracts.'[39]

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[37] BBC News, 'Government meets loyalist group', website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news , 14th August 2002.
[38] A recent Northern Ireland Select Committee report on organised crime (2002) stated that Northern Ireland paramilitaries were raking in eighteen million pounds a year.
[39] Cusack, J., and Taylor, M., 'Resurgence Of A Terrorist Organisation – Part 1: The UDA, A Case Study', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 5, Autumn 1993, No. 3, p. 2.

The divisions in the organisation were also bound to affect the prospects for a UDA political front. A divided UDA could quite likely lead to a divided political front and therefore undermine its effectiveness in whatever it tried to achieve. This appeared to be the case in January 2001 when an 'anti-agreement faction', amounting to about a third of the UDP, split from the party.[40] If the front wasn't divided then it couldn't be representative of the whole organisation leaving scope for brigades that weren't involved in its creation to engage in activity that would undermine what the political front was trying to accomplish.

Thus, the relatively weak ideology and decentralised nature of the group has meant that the role of the UDA's political fronts was severely restricted whether as tactical devices, as electoral tools, or as the means of introducing political initiatives.

## The UVF-PUP Relationship

The UVF appears to be more centralised, united and disciplined than the UDA. In theory this might impact on the nature of the relationship between the UVF and the PUP. The political front is more likely to be supported by the whole of the UVF and not by one section of it, nor would the activities that the front was set up to engage in likely to be undermined by the racketeering and corruption that have been so obvious in the UDA. Thus, it would appear that, notwithstanding other factors (such as being pro-state and the unionist division of labour ethos – see chapter 9), the more centralised structure (than the

[40] Murphy, C., 'Anti-agreement faction splits from UDP', Irish Times, January 24th 2001.

UDA), and greater discipline and unity, would lend itself to the more effective use of a political front.

There seems to be a divergence in views, however, as to the true nature of the relationship between the UVF and the PUP. Peter Taylor, for example, describes the UVF and PUP as one.[41] McAuley and Hislop, though, state that:

> 'There is little doubt that the PUP and the UVF liaise on issues that effect (sic) them both and that the UVF exert a significant influence on PUP policy making. The relationship is not a direct one, however. Firstly, the UVF's formal rules state that when a member is convicted for life or served 'substantial' sentences, he or she, is not allowed to re-join the organisation. So although the likes of Spence, Hutchinson and Ervine may have been involved in the UVF, we can reasonably assume that they are no longer active members.'[42]

Thus, UVF rules at least would suggest that, unlike the republican case, the leadership of the current PUP are not members of the UVF. Whether this was to deter harassment from the security forces or whether it represented a security risk to the organisation because of police attention to ex-prisoners, it would appear that former prisoners could join the PUP but could not rejoin the UVF. That would mean that the current leadership of the PUP could not be members of the UVF Military Council, in contrast to their republican counterparts where it is widely believed that Adams, McGuiness, and Ferris sit on the

[41] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists, p. 215.
[42] McAuley, J., and Hislop, S., ' 'Many roads forward': Politics and Ideology within the Progressive Unionist Party', Etudes Irlandaises, Spring 2000, p. 191.

IRA's Army Council. This is corroborated by the view of Hugh Smyth, a leading light in the old VPP and now the PUP, when he states that: 'there may well be ex-members of paramilitary groups in the PUP but there is no 'dual membership''[43]

David Ervine has stressed that the relationship between the UVF and the PUP is not the same as that of the IRA and Sinn Fein. You 'can't hold 'serious office' if you're a UVF member'.[44] The PUP, he said in 1998, 'are not front men and give no political direction' to the UVF but the party does provide 'political analysis concerning the constitutional situation in Northern Ireland and it is up to them [the UVF] what they do with that analysis.'[45] Billy Hutchinson described the PUP as 'political confidants of the illegal UVF'.[46]

The UVF magazine, Combat, also claims to shed light on the true nature of the relationship between the UVF and the PUP:

> 'While the leaderships of both the Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commando engage in dialogue with the Progressive Unionist Party with a view to jointly analysing political issues, no member of either organisation is required to support the Progressive Unionist Party either by becoming a member, canvassing for candidates or voting for those candidates. The special relationship between the UVF/RHC and the PUP is based partly on former associations and partly on the

[43] Smyth, H., quoted in: Sean McKee 'The Real Voice of Ulster Loyalism? The Progressive Unionist Party', M Litt Dissertation, University of Ulster, 1995, p. 11.
[44] Ervine, D., interview.
[45] Ervine, D., speech, Progressive Unionist Party website: www.pup.org, 10th December 1998.
[46] Ervine, D., quoted in McKittrick, D., The Nervous Peace, Blackstaff, Belfast, 1996, p.151.

trust and respect that has been generated through dialogue. The leadership's respect for the political analysis of the PUP has not diminished over the years. This does not mean that the UVF/RHC will always accept the analysis given or that the PUP will always endorse or speak favourably about UVF/RHC activities.'[47]

And in answer to the question: Does the PUP have any control of the military decisions reached by the UVF leadership?:

'The leadership engages with the Progressive Unionist Party only on the issue of Northern Ireland's constitutional position and current political developments which affect the rights of Northern Irelands citizens to freely express their democratic will on this issue. The UVF is very much a broad church; within our structures exist political and social opinions which amass the political spectrum, left to right wing, secular to religious. Our Volunteers are united by the fundamental desire to protect Northern Ireland's unity with Great Britain within the confines of a pluralist, democratic United Kingdom, any debate with the Progressive Unionist Party is geared towards that end. Neither the Progressive Unionist Party, nor any other outside body possess any semblance of control over the military decisions of the Ulster Volunteer Force. Those decisions are taken at Brigade level and throughout the various levels of leadership within our

[47] 'Ulster Volunteer Force Speaks Out', Combat, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, (undated).

organisation, based upon our founding principles and the policies formulated by the highest councils of our organisation.'[48]

It is interesting to note that there is very little mention of socialism or working class issues, which have provided much of the raison d'étre for the PUP. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that, in comparison with the Sinn Fein and IRA case, it appears that the PUP have enjoyed relatively more autonomy from the UVF. One 'senior member' of the UVF stated that:

'The governments assume that when they talk to the Progressive Unionist Party they are also talking to the UVF. They think it's like talking to Sinn Fein. When they talk to Sinn Fein leaders, they are really talking to the IRA. But it's not the same with the PUP, they don't necessarily represent the views of the UVF.'[49]

Alternatively, when General John de Chastelain recalled his meeting with PUP spokesman Billy Hutchison, who filled the role of interlocutor to the decommissioning body on behalf of the UVF, he recalled that 'when Hutchison spoke to us, we knew he was speaking to us on behalf of the UVF, when we put questions to him for the UVF, the answers, we knew were from the UVF.'[50] Perhaps the most logical conclusion to draw is that, as Aughey states, the relationships are more to do with interactions between personalities at leadership levels rather than formalised dual membership as is the case

[48] Ibid.
[49] McDonald, H., 'Finucane murder suspect may turn Queen's evidence', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , December 23rd 2001.
[50] Sengupta, K., 'General handled a tricky task with patience and calmness', The Independent, October 31st 2002.

with the IRA and Sinn Fein. It would, though, appear that the PUP has enjoyed more autonomy from the UVF than Sinn Fein has from the IRA.

## The Impact on the Role of the UVF's Political Fronts

Like the UDA, the pro-state nature of the UVF's ideology has limited the utility of its political fronts (see chapter 9). Moreover, the greater degree of detachment in comparison to Sinn Fein and the IRA might lessen the chance of the UVF's political fronts being used as tactical devices. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that the group also (like the UDA) has a relatively weak ideology, it has been more centralised and disciplined than the UDA. This has enabled its political front to be used more effectively, as it appears that it speaks for the whole organisation, whereas the UDP clearly did not.

## Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the IRA's powerful ideology has facilitated its disciplined hierarchical structure and this in turn has helped it to control its political front through dual membership, particularly at leadership level. Thus, the organisational structure of the movement has helped to determine the nature of the relationship between the IRA and Sinn Fein, which has been one of loyalty and deference to the Army Council. This in turn has helped to affect the type of role the political front has had. Rather than as an alternative to the armed struggle the political front has for most of its life been a sub-unit

of the organisation, designed to undertake activities that enhance the overall object of driving the British from the province.

As far as the loyalist groups are concerned the main thrust of this thesis is that their political fronts were utilised because of disillusionment with 'respectable' politicians and the belief that the loyalist working class needed political representation. It will also argue (in chapter 9) that the main obstacle to the use of loyalist political fronts has been the division of labour ethos that exists within unionism as a whole. Even members of the UDA and UVF vote for the mainstream unionist parties. This chapter argues that while these 'external' factors were more significant as far as limiting the potential for loyalist political fronts has been concerned, in the case of the UDA its decentralised structure would also have had a limiting effect on their potential use. Perhaps partly because of weak ideology it is an organisation that has not been able to establish a central command structure that imposes discipline from all its members. It is clear that the political projects aligned to the group have not been subjected to the same discipline and control as their republican counterparts. This has meant that their utility as tactical devices would have been limited. With the UDA's image of gangsterism, their utility as the means through which to communicate political initiatives and/or to stand at elections has also been restricted. The more centralised UVF's greater discipline has meant that its political front has been utilised more effectively.

# Chapter 6 - Violence as a Habit

This chapter aims to assess the impact that 'violence as a habit' has had on the utility of the political fronts. It will firstly assess the extent to which violence can become habitual both at the individual and organisational level, drawing on some aspects of psychological and organisational theory respectively. It will then study the post-ceasefire period (when the groups are supposed to have been on ceasefire) and establish that the use of violence *has* continued. Although this could be for a number of reasons it is argued that the use of violence has to some degree become habitual, both at the individual and organisational level. Finally, the chapter will argue that 'violence as a habit' has generally had a detrimental impact on the utility of the political front, especially where its role is that of an electoral tool. In the case of the IRA continuing violence from those wanting 'action' to satisfy personal needs and the organisational imperatives that sustain the IRA for its own sake (two of the constituent elements of 'violence as habit'), it is argued, have had negative repercussions on Sinn Fein's attempts to develop itself as an all-Ireland party and on any prospect that it might share power in a coalition government in the Irish Republic.[1]

Sinn Fein has had other functions, however, and these have included 'community policing' and vigilantism, as well as creating instability, through riots and street violence, in order to try and prove that the Northern Ireland statelet is inherently unsustainable. Paradoxically, therefore, while violence as a habit may have been detrimental to Sinn

Fein's electoral ambitions, the fact that the IRA is on ceasefire may have increased the utility of the front in other ways. As violence has become habitual to some, and if an organisation needs to undertake a certain level of activity to sustain itself, then both needs could be satisfied if those wanting 'action' are employed in Sinn Fein activities – vigilantism and orchestrated street violence. On the loyalist side violence as a habit has also had a negative effect on the utility of the two groups' political fronts. That is because they have generally been used as electoral tools to court the vote of a 'law abiding' community and have also in the main represented a sign of moderation towards the use of violence.

In the first instance it is important to acknowledge that it would be extremely difficult, and indeed highly speculative, to attempt to assess the *extent* to which violence has become a habit, independent of any other variables. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the degree to which this particular 'variable' has affected group strategy vis a vis the use of a political front. This is particularly the case when, for example, at the individual level, 'faced with similar threats, conditions, circumstances, or pressures, some individuals react violently when others do not', and that 'when we recognize wide differences in individual capacities for patience and tolerance, we are admitting the empirical variability of individual thresholds for aggressive responses.'[2] Notwithstanding the above limitations, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that the use of violence can build up a momentum of its own. Terrorist groups can often persist with their strategies of

[1] Both the major parties have expressed their unequivocal opposition to sharing power with Sinn Fein unless the party 'resolved its relationship with the IRA.'
[2] Wilkinson, P., 'Social Scientific Theory and Civil Violence', in Alexander, Y., Carlton, D., and Wilkinson, P. (eds.), Terrorism: Theory and Practice, Westview, Colorado 1979, p. 57.

violence even when other factors might indicate that it is not rational for them to do so, and this might have a bearing on whether or not to use or to what extent they might utilise a political front.

## The Individual

To explain why individuals can become 'hooked' on violence, while it is not the intention to engage in a detailed assessment as to why men and women become violent[3], it is useful to at least be aware of some of the psychological and theoretical explanations that might help to account for violence in general and more specifically the political violence in Northern Ireland. The reason for this is that if violence has been perpetrated through personal needs, for example, then this could have an impact on the utility of a political front. The explanations for violence seem to rest between two propositions – the first from 'instinctivists', who see aggression as a natural instinct of human behaviour, and the second from 'environmentalists', who view such behaviour as a product of the environment (see Section 3). This chapter is concerned with the notion of violence as a habit notwithstanding the impact of environmental or external factors. It will therefore briefly focus on the instinctivist psychological reasons for individuals becoming involved in the first place as some of these reasons may persist and thus help to bring about the persistence of violence from an individual perspective, which in turn may militate against the potential for the greater utility of a political front.

[3] See, for example, Gurr, T., Why Men Rebel, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1971.

An individual's own personal experiences might help to account for people joining terrorist organisations in the first place. These might in many cases relate to encounters with the state security forces, through, for example, the so-called 'Rape of the Falls', or the imposition of internment or Bloody Sunday.[4] Eamonn Collins, in his autobiography, wrote of his feelings after apparently being wrongly arrested and assaulted by the British Army:

> 'Sometimes, as I remembered that night, I would feel the soldiers had merely made an understandable mistake in a conflict which was not of their making. Other times I would feel a surge of rage whose power would unbalance me: I would sit alone in my room and think with pleasure of blowing off the heads of those para scum.'[5]

One element of the notion of violence as a habit is the idea that individuals in Northern Ireland have joined terrorist groups as the means of attaining adventure and excitement, as a way of enhancing self-esteem amongst peers and within communities, and as the means of boosting their ego. Eric Fromm's work in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* gives a useful insight into the various explanations for the origins of violence from human beings. He notes that for man the satisfying of his organic needs alone does not make him happy. His passions move him and excite him[6] - 'in his attempt

[4] These events will be looked at in more detail for their impact in the state response chapter.
[5] Collins, E., Killing Rage, Granta, London, 1997, p. 53
[6] Fromm, E., The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, Cape, London, 1974, p. 265.

to transcend the triviality of his life man is driven to seek adventure, to look beyond and even to cross the limiting frontier of human existence.'[7]

If terrorist activity partly reflects the individual's need for 'adventure' then this might be an inhibiting factor against the use of a political front,[8] especially where this represented moderation towards the use of violence. Crenshaw writes:

> 'The incentives for joining a terrorist organization, especially one that is already established and of known character, include a variety of individual needs: to belong to a group, to acquire social status and reputation, to find comradeship or excitement, or to gain material benefits. The popular image of the terrorist as an individual motivated exclusively by deep and intransigent political commitment obscures a more complex reality. Under certain conditions, membership in an underground organization is a valued social relationship, winning the militant the respect and admiration of peers and family. Joining an organization in order to enhance one's appearance in the eyes of others is characteristic of nationalist and separatist groups.... Since many terrorists are adolescents, joining may be a sign of personal daring or social rebellion more than political belief. Other incentives are those intangible benefits of association in a group: a feeling of belonging, acceptance, and solidarity.'[9]

[7] Ibid. p. 267.
[8] Unless, of course, some of the functions/activity of a political front includes the use of violence, for example through vigilantism, street riots, or intimidation.

There is no doubt that paramilitary groups have become a source of prestige for many youngsters in Northern Irish schools and something to aspire to become part of. The establishment of the youth wings of the groups, such as the Young Volunteer Force and the Ulster Young Militants (the UVF and UDA youth wings), is testament to this. The leader of the UDA's South Brigade said in 2001 that 'in the past, it was the done thing in many loyalist areas to join the paramilitaries, and a lot of kids still want to get involved.'[10] One Belfast IRA man stated in 1993 that 'still the organisation [the IRA] has the luxury of more people than it needs ... there's young blood coming up all the time...'.[11] Reports have suggested that violence in schools in the province have shown a marked increase amongst teenagers since the ceasefires.[12] It seems that the endurance of the Troubles and the entrenchment of paramilitary culture has led to a higher degree of propensity towards violence among youngsters than would otherwise have been the case.

Bishop and Mallie have described how many 'volunteers' 'found the experience of 'war' exhilarating, especially those who took part in rural operations:

> 'One spoke of 'being so excited after a job that we shot the wee birds in the wires as we drove back from it.' Another , after a shooting, of 'feeling like eating a big dinner you felt so excited afterwards.' Eyewitnesses to the assassination of a school bus driver and part-time UDR man in 1984 described how his two killers

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[9] Crenshaw, M., 'Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches', in Rapoport, D., (ed.), Inside Terrorist Organizations, Frank Cass, London, 2001, pp. 19-20.
[10] Rosie Cowan, 'Loyalists recruit the next generation', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , April 3, 2001.
[11] O'Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 104.
[12] See, for example, 'Union says schools may need guards', The Examiner, February 26th 2000.

whooped with joy as they escaped on a motorcycle. Some found the excitement addictive.'[13]

Violence was alluring for other reasons too. The IRA, UDA and UVF have all essentially been working class organisations and the prestige of becoming a 'volunteer' has offered the working class a chance for esteem and a position of status within their communities and amongst their peers. Fromm argues that:

> 'among the working class boredom is much more conscious than among the middle and upper classes ... they lack the genuine satisfaction experienced by many persons on a higher social level whose work allows them, at least to some extent, to be involved in creative planning, exercising their imaginative, intellectual, and organizational faculties.'[14]

Thus, the escape from normal mundane life is a natural impulse and in fact not one only pursued by illegal combatants. Fromm states that the fact that war has the positive features of adventurousness, solidarity, equality, and idealism is a sad comment on our civilization which entails injustice, inequality and boredom governing social life in peacetime.[15] Thus, belonging to a terrorist group can fulfil some of the same personal needs that a state's soldiers might seek to satisfy.

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[13] Bishop, P., and Mallie, E., The Provisional IRA, London: Corgi, 1992, p. 195.
[14] Op. cit. Fromm p. 244.
[15] Ibid. pp. 214-15.

In summary, as Crenshaw notes above, the appeal of sticking with a group can be as much to do with personal needs as ideological orientation and this can help to perpetuate the use of violence and a group's existence beyond what may seem politically rational. This in turn may have a negative impact on the utility of a political front, particularly if it represents a sign of moderation. Moreover, each act of violence can reinforce the self-esteem of 'volunteers'. Collins described how the further he got steeped in violence the more he needed further 'fixes' or operations.[16] Having established that violence can become habitual at the individual level the impact of this variable on the utility of the political front will be assessed later in the chapter.

## The Organisation

### Ideology

Before going on to outline some aspects of organisational theory it is first of all necessary to stress that the use of violence by the IRA, the UDA and the UVF in Northern Ireland has been part and parcel of the traditions and ideologies of republicanism and loyalism that stretch back hundreds of years and it is these legacies that, to varying degrees, can provide a powerful allure to its inheritors, especially republicans, and have therefore helped to underpin the notion of 'violence as a habit'. As Bowyer Bell pointed out of the IRA in the early 1960s, for example, the 'dead weight of tradition ... made it difficult for the young men to chart an alternative course once the military option had aborted'[17], while men like MacStoifain 'had [a] ...fanatical belief in the 'traditional' virtues of

[16] Op. cit. Collins p. 158.
[17] Bowyer Bell, J., The Secret Army, The IRA, 1916-1979, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, p. 340.

...Republicanism.'[18] Indeed, so potent have the traditions and ideology of the IRA, in particular, been that should its followers wane in one generation there is still the potential for a resurgence in the next one.

Remaining with the case of the IRA, it is also important to remember the commemorative culture that permeates everything the republican movement does.[19] The annual gatherings that were held in memory of Sean South[20], the Wolfe Tone gathering at Bodenstown every June, and the yearly Hunger strike commemorations are just a few examples. Conor Cruise O'Brien notes the impact of the 'cult' of the 1916 Rising as a factor behind the durability of IRA violence[21], while Ben Caraher, a former SDLP member, remarks that Irish literature that disparages politicians 'works on you. It's how a political tradition is passed on, almost unconsciously.'[22] Certainly republican ideology and its traditions have given subsequent generations of 'volunteers' the feeling that they were '[sharing a] sense of being heir to a long history of violent republicanism'.[23] Violence to some in the republican movement, therefore, has become a transgenerational habit and it is the powerful currents in republican tradition that have served to undermine the greater utilisation of a political front. That is because these currents have militated against any moderation towards the use of physical force and therefore any use of the political front that may represent such moderation, and also against any strategy that might entail greater engagement with British structures, even if this was tactical.

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[18] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie, p. 135.
[19] See O'Brien, C., States Of Ireland, Anchor Press, London, 1972, p. 270.
[20] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell p. 308.
[21] O'Brien, C., 'Terrorism Under Democratic Conditions: The Case of the IRA', Crenshaw, M. (ed.), Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power, Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 1983, p. 101.
[22] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 363.

The loyalists' ideology is far less alluring, largely due to the problems associated with being pro-state groups, as outlined in chapter 9. But this hasn't stopped them drawing on a long tradition of sectarian violence against the Catholic population.

## Organisational Theory

Martha Crenshaw wrote:

> 'Organizational analysis explains ... why terrorism continues regardless of political results. ... Organizations are much more responsive to the environment during their inception than in the course of subsequent operations. The older the organization, the more its behavior is explained by organizational imperatives.'[24]

This section is concerned with the internal processes of a terrorist organisation that perpetuate its existence. If a terrorist organisation exists to carry out terrorist acts then in order to exist it needs to carry out such acts. Otherwise, its purpose and reason for being become redundant and logically the group should disband. The problem is that, even if the logical course of action is to disband (through sufficient state concessions or changes in the environment), there are internal processes that can take place that serve to perpetuate the existence of a group when it may not otherwise be rational or serve its original purpose. If this is the case then clearly this might militate against the utilitisation

[23] Urban, M., Big Boys' Rules, The Secret Struggle Against The IRA, Faber and Faber, London, 1992, p. 32.
[24] Op. cit. Crenshaw, 'Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches' p. 21.

of a political front as a sign of moderation, or indeed any political engagement.[25] The internal processes include an enhanced sense of group loyalty through personal needs, and thus a devotion to a group's maintenance as the primary goal (ahead of political objectives), and leadership status that would not easily be relinquished from those in senior positions. 'Organizational process theory', cited by Crenshaw, suggests that:

> 'terrorism can become self-sustaining regardless of its political consequences,' and it assumes 'that the fundamental purpose of any political organization is to maintain itself. Terrorist behavior represents the outcome of the internal dynamics of the organization rather than strategic action. The minimal goal of any organization is survival, but the goals of the people occupying roles in an organization transcend mere survival. Leaders, in particular, wish to enhance and promote the organization. Their personal ambitions are tied to the organization's viability and political position.'[26]

The theory therefore suggests that even if a group's political demands were met the organisation would still persist as a natural outcome of internal dynamics and personal ambitions. The question would arise as to the extent that terrorist leaders, so used to positions of power and subservience from their subordinates within an undemocratic environment, have the ability to adapt to an open democratic political setting, where disagreements are resolved through debate and dialogue. If a terrorist group's main preoccupation is to exist regardless of other factors then this would militate against the

[25]Although the utility of the political front might be enhanced if its role is vigilantism and this is used to 'sustain' the group.

use of a political front as a sign of moderation, where such use might be perceived as 'the beginning of the end' of the group.

A group's isolation from mainstream society can enhance loyalty to the group and its leadership and can therefore also perpetuate an organisation's existence beyond what may seem rational. Wilson states that:

> 'Progressive isolation from the environment reduces the amount and quality of the information members receive about external events. They become less concerned with the achievement of political goals and more concerned with maintaining the group.'[27]

It could therefore be argued that by isolating itself from mainstream society the political (or otherwise) assessment of the terrorist group, composed of like-minded individuals and therefore reinforcing opinions, often bears no relation to reality. As Fromm states consensus can succeed in transforming fantasy into reality, 'since for most people reality is constituted by general consensus and not based on reason or critical examination'[28], and 'sometimes the consensus even of a small group suffices to create reality.'[29] This is one of the reasons why Crenshaw suggests that terrorists may not recognise failure.[30] Again this may defer or even indefinitely postpone greater utilisation of a political front,

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[26] Op. cit. Crenshaw, 'Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches' p. 19.
[27] Wilson, J., cited in op. cit. Crenshaw 'Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches', p. 21.
[28] Op. cit. Fromm p. 203.
[29] Ibid. p. 203.
[30] Crenshaw, M., 'How Terrorism Declines', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 3, No. 1, (Spring, 1991), p. 87.

where recognition of the failure in the use of violence might otherwise have prompted a reevaluation of strategy that could have given a political front a role or a larger role.

Writing on the IRA, Bishop and Mallie stated that:

> 'Once you are in, friendships with those outside the ranks become awkward, circumscribed by the need for secrecy. In the bleak, barn-like social clubs of West Belfast, the IRA men drink with each other, while their wives and girlfriends form a separate, exclusive huddle. This rock-pool atmosphere is addictive. Many of those who have left the movement or been forced out miss its conspiratorial closeness; they find the open water cold and daunting.'[31]

According to one IRA commander: 'People became very close. Eating and sleeping together, fighting and dying together.'[32]

Indeed the whole notion of self exclusion 'from genuine dialogue' with others, argued Bishop Daly when speaking of the IRA in the early 1990s, 'generates a sort of desperation'. 'I wonder', he said, 'if it's because their ingenuity and intelligence have been too concentrated on their military survival – that they haven't really done enough deep, informed political thinking to see if theirs are realistic and feasible political objectives.'[33] One observer questioned whether the IRA leaders wanted a solution: 'would it not put them out of a job? Would they be willing to give up the role of 'heroic

[31] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie, p. 12.
[32] Ibid. p. 196.

patriot' they once had if they got what they wanted?'[34] After all the raison d'etre of members, their positions as glorified 'freedom fighters', and the high profile of respected and revered leaders all depend upon the continued existence of the organisation.

## The IRA

In order to assess how violence can become habitual even when other factors would appear to deem its use as detrimental to the group's political goals it would be useful to focus on the groups after their official ceasefires, and why in the post-ceasefire period violence has continued. This is because, notwithstanding strategic motives, where violence has become habitual it is more likely to be exposed when a group is supposed to be on ceasefire. Then can one more accurately assess the impact of this particular variable on the utility of a political front. Any assessment of the reasons for the persistence of violence, however, is bound to some degree to be speculative when one is not privy to the inner workings of these secret organisations.

The first point to establish is that IRA violence has continued since the Good Friday Agreement was signed. As at August 2001 the group had killed eleven people in Northern Ireland and was suspected of killing between 6 and 10 people in the Republic in its campaign against drugs[35]. It has also continued to carry out punishment beatings on

[33] Daly, E., quoted in op. cit. O'Connor p. 287.
[34] Blythe, G., 'Talk to the IRA', The Independent, January 1992.
[35] Cusack, J., 'Terrorists still killing despite agreement', Irish Times, 1st August 2001.

so-called 'undesirables'[36] and expulsions 'to control working class communities'.[37] The group has also murdered opponents (Real IRA member Joe O'Connor was murdered by the IRA in November 2000). The Colombian episode, where three IRA men were apparently not only training FARC rebels in explosives technology but were also allegedly testing out weapons for themselves, has provided further suspicion of continuing IRA activity as does the theft of highly sensitive documents from Special Branch offices in the Castlereagh complex[38]. So too does the recovery by police of an IRA targeting list that was updated as recently as 2001. The PSNI believe that nationalist riots in Belfast have also been orchestrated by mainstream republicans while it was an alleged IRA spy ring operating at the heart of Stormont that led to the suspension of the new political dispensation in October 2002.

The IRA's organised criminal activity has also continued. It is apparently heavily engaged in smuggling fuel while the organisation dominates the illegal trade in cigarettes.[39] This kind of activity has continued unabated with the recent four million pound theft of cigarettes in the Republic.[40] It has also continued to be involved in the extortion of money.[41]

It is important to acknowledge that there could be any number of reasons for the persistence of IRA violence and activity that bear no relation to the notion that violence

[36] See McDonald, H., 'Sick mother speaks out over IRA beating of teenage son', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , January 7th 2001.
[37] Barnes, H., and Kent, G., 'An end to exile', http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , 1st August 2001.
[38] At the time of writing the PSNI have made it clear that the main line of enquiry involves the IRA.
[39] 'Shadowy figures who lie behind Border smuggling', The Irish Times, March 3rd 2001.
[40] McDonald, H., 'Trimble quits with call to suspend Assembly, Guardian newsunlimited, http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , July 1st 2001.

has become a habit. The fact that the group has remained intact could be for strategic reasons. It could be that it is preparing for a return to war if need be. Or, as this thesis argues, it could be to avoid the accusation that the organisation was surrendering at the same time as enabling the republican leadership to continue to use the threat of violence to gain further concessions. Continuing activity might also be a strategic choice such as the orchestration of violence in Belfast to discredit the new PSNI. Or it could simply be a manifestation of the different strands of opinion in the movement, including varying levels of commitment to republican traditions and ideology, and therefore such activity might be necessary to hold the organization together.[42] Changes in the environment, such as an increase in loyalist street violence, might also help to account for continuing IRA activity.

It would seem unsatisfactory, however, to exclude the notion that violence may also have persisted due to pressures for organisational survival and, at the individual level, from those who want action, or as Collins put it, more 'fixes'. Much depends on the intentions of the IRA. If it is sincere about a commitment to democracy, come what may, then it might suggest that at least some of its ongoing activity might be related to factors to do with 'personal needs' or organisational sustenance. The difficulty lies in separating the potential motivations above from the possibility that the perpetration of violence has also become habitual, and, to reiterate, when one is not privy to the ongoings within the organisation the conclusions are bound to some degree to be speculative.

[41] Cusack, J., 'Main terrorist groups still recruit and train', Irish Times, July 3rd 2001.

One way of attempting to do this is to try and identify those types of activity that do not appear to bear any relation to political goals. It seems that, although political violence has receded, the illegal fundraising structures that have helped to support and sustain the armed struggle remain in place. If anything they have expanded during the peace process.[43] While the cutting edge of violence may have been reduced all the structures that underpinned it are still there. In the case of the IRA the group may have used these activities and indeed increased them in order to maintain organisational cohesion. Crenshaw states:

> 'The operational interpretation of ideology will vary according to the need to ensure organizational survival. The chance for action, no matter what it accomplishes, may be a dominant incentive ... Circumstances may alter incentive structures. If an organization is forced into inactivity, substitute incentives must be found. Some might shift to dealing in drugs, for example.'[44]

If violence for the original political objectives is no longer appropriate organisational survival dictates that alternative avenues through which to channel violent activities are needed and it is the increase in the illegal activities that keeps the organisation united and operational. It will be argued in the conclusion to this thesis that the IRA has kept itself intact mainly because it is now trying to 'win the argument'.[45] It can't therefore take any action that could be construed as surrender or that would lead to mass defections to RIRA

[42] Brian Keenan, for example is said to believe that IRA violence stopped too soon (Henry Patterson, interview).
[43] Northern Ireland Select Committee report on organised crime (2002).
[44] Op. cit. Crenshaw, Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power, p. 20.

or CIRA. Therefore it seems that the group has continued its organised criminal activity to keep the organisation intact, in keeping with the Crenshaw's scenario above, rather than the other way round – ie. keeping it intact to profit from such crime. The IRA is, after all, a military organisation and therefore one assumes that in order to survive it needs to undertake a certain level of activity. Part of this activity may include the need to use violence to keep these illegal empires intact from predators.[46]

Not only has organised crime helped the IRA to sustain itself at the organisational level but it seems that it has also been in the interests of certain individuals to keep this kind of activity going and even increase it, regardless of the ceasefire and the peace process. Although it appears that illegal activity has been geared towards, ostensibly at least, the political goals of the organisation, the true picture may be different. Jim Cusack stated in June 2001:

> 'With the continuation of the peace process in Northern Ireland, it appears that an unusual number of former IRA figures have acquired wealth. Gardai suspect that some have done so illegally ... One former leading IRA figure is also recently reputed to have bought a home in the Caribbean.'[47]

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[45] To coin Arthur Aughey's phrase (interview).
[46] Real IRA member Joe O'Connor was said to have been murdered by the IRA for 'moving in' on the IRA's cigarette smuggling racket (See Cusack, J., 'New ferocity to gang 'wars' outside Dublin', The Irish Times, June 11th 2001).
[47] Cusack, J., 'New ferocity to gang 'wars' outside Dublin', The Irish Times, June 11th 2001.

Another former IRA leader is said to have become a millionaire through smuggling fuel.[48] Thus, although it is widely believed that it is the loyalists that are often engaged in organised crime for personal gain, the same could be said of some republican figures, and thus individual self-interest might be another factor that has accounted for the persistence of such IRA activity.

The desire to maintain the organisation might also account for the dramatic increase in the number of punishment beatings in the post-ceasefire period. This is corroborated by Liam Kennedy's research on vigilantism when he argues that:

> 'It is hardly coincidental that 1975 was the worst year for republican 'punishment' activity and that it was also a year in which a ceasefire existed for much of that time. This kind of substitutionism may also explain, in part, the persistence of 'punishment' beatings in nationalist and loyalist areas, and especially in West and North Belfast, during the months following the IRA's 'total cessation' of violence in August 1994 and the loyalist ceasefire soon afterwards.'[49]

Silke also argues that there were organisational imperatives in maintaining a certain level of violence:

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[48] 'Shadowy figures who lie behind Border smuggling', The Irish Times, March 3rd 2001.
[49] Kennedy Liam, 'Nightmares within Nightmares: Paramilitary Repression within Working-Class Communities', in Crime and Punishment in West Belfast, by Liam Kennedy (ed.), The Summer School, West Belfast, 1995, p. 78.

'With the current set of cease-fires, the ASU members were again essentially left idle. Training and intelligence gathering continued but this required considerably less activity than the organization had previously been expending. As a result, members were transferred into vigilante activities to keep them occupied while still providing a 'useful community service'. Added to this, vigilantism provides the IRA with a low risk opportunity to 'blood' new recruits and to test potential members. Recruitment continued for all paramilitaries during the cease-fires and the punishment attacks provided a ready activity to blood these new members.'[50]

In some cases a beating had a dual purpose. Some of the victims were those that were considering joining dissident groups but the main motivation behind the increase, whoever was 'beaten', was to keep those 'volunteers' who were keen for action on board. Thus, the rise in punishment beatings has not only been a manifestation of the continued desire for action on the part of 'volunteers' but also a way of sustaining the terrorist organisation. By keeping these members occupied the IRA has managed to maintain unity and cohesion at the same time as sustaining the power and prestige of the leadership. While there are IRA Army Council members in the leadership of Sinn Fein, their power and authority is derived from being at the apex of the IRA and not as leaders of the party. A PSNI Special Branch source stated that:

'if IRA leaders gave up their positions on the Army Council they'd lose control. They might also lose control if there wasn't a continuing level of violence. It also

[50] Silke, A., 'Rebel's Dilemma: The Changing Relationship between the IRA, Sinn Fein and Paramilitary Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 1999), p. 88.

may have been useful to keep non Sinn Fein members on the Council so that the grass roots don't feel neglected.'[51]

The notion that the grass roots of the IRA has to be placated is taken further by O'Connor when she stated, from her survey in 1993, that 'the assessment that leading republicans are afraid of those in their own movement has become commonplace among many Northern Catholics, like the clear-eyed summary of grassroots motivation as 'simply frustration and revenge'.'[52] One former supporter highlights another problem:

> '[The IRA] is a military organisation. Even the most political of them have a different concept of politics from people involved in conventional, electoral lobbying, where you're conditioned to accept that you may be beaten at times and you then reorganise and come back. Their attitude to politics has been very much – if you don't win, there's no point.'[53]

In summary, the IRA has continued with its organised criminal activity as well as a certain level of violence through punishment beatings in order to sustain the organisation. The steep increase in such beatings and expulsions in 2001-2 (see PSNI table below) gives one of the clearest indications that the perpetration of violence has become habitual at the 'individual' level. This activity has been permitted in order to satisfy the demand for 'action' and to sustain the organisation. A PSNI Special Branch source has verified

[51] Special Branch source, interview.
[52] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 370.
[53] Quoted in op. cit. O'Connor p. 369.

that it is one of the ways that the leadership has held the organisation together, along with 'rearming, training, targeting and criminality'.[54]

## Casualties as a Result of Paramilitary-Style Attacks 1990/91 – 2003/04[55]

| | Shootings | | | Assaults* | | | Total Casualties (Shootings and Assaults) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | By Loyalist Groups | By Republican Groups | Total | By Loyalist Groups | By Republican Groups | |
| 1990/91 | 112 | 61 | 51 | 53 | 18 | 35 | 165 |
| 1991/92 | 64 | 44 | 20 | 79 | 27 | 52 | 143 |
| 1992/93 | 139 | 69 | 70 | 56 | 33 | 23 | 195 |
| 1993/94 | 83 | 59 | 24 | 42 | 37 | 5 | 125 |
| 1994/95 | 98 | 55 | 43 | 105 | 46 | 59 | 203 |
| 1995/96 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 246 | 90 | 156 | 252 |
| 1996/97 | 41 | 37 | 4 | 291 | 125 | 166 | 332 |
| 1997/98 | 73 | 33 | 40 | 125 | 70 | 55 | 198 |
| 1998/99 | 73 | 40 | 33 | 172 | 112 | 60 | 245 |
| 1999/00 | 75 | 53 | 22 | 103 | 70 | 33 | 178 |
| 2000/01 | 162 | 99 | 63 | 161 | 89 | 72 | 323 |
| 2001/02 | 190 | 124 | 66 | 112 | 76 | 36 | 302 |
| 2002/03 | 165 | 110 | 55 | 140 | 92 | 48 | 305 |
| 2002/03 *(to 25/05/02)* | 13 | 8 | 5 | 21 | 16 | 5 | 34 |
| 2003/04 *(to 25/05/03)* | 22 | 16 | 6 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 37 |

*Beatings

The next step is to assess how these 'violence as a habit' activities have impacted on the utility of the IRA's political front.

[54] Special Branch source, interview.

## The Impact of 'Violence as a Habit'

By assessing the post-ceasefire period it should in theory make it easier to identify activity that represents some form of violence having become habitual. It would then be reasonable to assume that this habitual element was present in the years of the Troubles but was more disguised because of the strategic decision to pursue a violent political campaign anyway. It is possible to discern, however, that the level of indiscriminate violence that persisted in the 1980s did not seem to be conducive to the overall strategy of the republican leadership. The Enniskillen bomb, for example, with the murder of innocent civilians (rather than 'combatants') did not tie in with the electoral part of the republican approach. This was evident in the fact that Adams felt the need to call for refinement on a number of occasions. Clearly, it was his view that 'violence as a habit' in this instance, through continuing indiscriminate violence when 'refinement' was called for, was detrimental to Sinn Fein's electoral progress and therefore to its utility as an electoral tool at this time.

Of course, the impact of 'violence as a habit' on the utility of a political front depends on what the role of that political front is. In the post-ceasefire period, for example, if one of Sinn Fein's roles has been 'community policing' or punishment beatings (such as that carried out by the 'Concerned Parents Against Drugs' in North Kerry) then 'violence as a habit' may well have actually *increased* the utility of the political front by providing the

[55] From the Police Service of Northern Ireland website at: http://www.psni.police.uk/stats/punbeat2.shtml .

means for IRA members to carry out these more 'Sinn Fein activities' instead of exploding bombs or shooting security force personnel. Silke argues that:

> 'Sinn Fein is intimately involved in every aspect of the vigilantism. Indeed, a case can be argued that the political infrastructure from which contemporary Sinn Fein emerged ultimately had its origins in the efforts of republicanism to establish formal structures to facilitate organized vigilantism'.[56]

In fact 'co-ordinating vigilantism was one of the most important functions of the political party'.[57] In the case of the IRA, therefore, the political front, in times of ceasefire, may provide the means for some of the substitute activities for those volunteers who want 'action'. In times of 'war' this function would of course be unnecessary, where IRA men were presumably otherwise employed and so did not need to engage themselves with Sinn Fein activities of this sort. Nevertheless, the fact that punishment beatings increased in times of ceasefire suggest a certain level of addiction to the perpetration of violence, an addiction which can affect the utility of a political front in a detrimental way even in times of 'war', such as in the 1980s.

When one considers that Sinn Fein has also been an electoral tool then the IRA's continuing activity could be seen as something of a double-edged sword. The political front might be popular at the local level by getting rid of social nuisances and drug dealers through beatings and expulsions. Indeed Morrisey and Pease argue that:

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[56] Op. cit. Silke p. 71.
[57] Ibid. p. 75.

> 'within Belfast, a strong measure of support is expressed for the I.R.A. in its punishment role. The support is variable, and particular incidents provoke more general condemnation, but the belief that 'somebody has to do something' is fairly widespread.'[58]

The fact that Martin Ferris was elected to the Irish Dail shortly after being arrested for allegedly administering a beating also suggests that there is a localised demand for Sinn Fein vigilante activities.

At the regional and national level, and in the Irish Republic, however, the picture is very different. Most people clearly cannot bring themselves to vote for a party that still engages in such activity and is still linked to an intact and indeed active IRA. This is reflected in the relatively few second preference votes that Sinn Fein manages to poll.[59] This is because not only are electors asked to choose which manifesto they prefer but also, perhaps more fundamentally, as democrats, whether or not they want to vote for a perceived anti-democratic party. In the North, too, vigilantism has not helped the party's appeal in the eyes of middle class Catholics. The problem has not gone unnoticed amongst some republicans:

> '[Some] Sinn Fein members dislike it [vigilantism] ... because of the issues of disrepute that the practice raises and the subsequent impact this can have on

[58] Morrissey, M., and Pease, K., 'The Black Criminal Justice System in West Belfast', The Howard Journal, Vol. XXI, 1982, p. 165.

political support. Rough and ready vigilantism may be popular with many people at a local level, but it reflects poorly on a political party with serious national ambitions. Sinn Fein has always depended on the nationalist working-class for its core support, but it is not likely to gain wider acceptance among the North's growing nationalist middle-class so long as it is clear that the party is deeply involved in the violent activities of a paramilitary organization.'[60]

The difficulty for republicans is that since the 1970s they had actively encouraged local communities to use them as an alternative law enforcement system with its own summary justice – to such a degree that many in these communities have come to depend on Sinn Fein to address social problems such as drug dealers and joyriders. If the IRA and Sinn Fein stopped these activities then they risked losing this localised support at the ballot box. Not only that, these people might start to use the 'illegitimate' state police force as the means to deal with social nuisances, and this would carry the risk of increasing the number of informers. Or indeed people might look elsewhere for 'protection'. For example, during the recent riots in Belfast the INLA has challenged this traditional role of the IRA.[61] Silke remarks that despite attempts to stop it (in 1983 and 1993) 'public pressure forced them to return to the old levels of violence, even though senior republicans knew the policy was not effective and was ultimately hurting the movement in the wider political arena.'[62]

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[59] See ARK Northern Ireland elections website: http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa98.htm .
[60] Op. cit. Silke p. 81.

This traditional role of the front that it took upon itself, therefore, would be difficult to shrug off, even if it wanted to (as stated above keeping IRA members occupied with 'Sinn Fein activities' has actually been one of the ways to keep the IRA intact). But this aspect of violence as a habit has without doubt hampered the party's prospects at the national level and also therefore its utility as an electoral tool. At least, while Sinn Fein refuses to endorse the new Police Service of Northern Ireland, republicans can make a prima facie case for the perpetuation of the alternative justice system. If the party were to join the Policing Board, however, then one might assume that Sinn Fein's traditional 'community policing' role would be curtailed as it could not presumably justify two separate and rival law enforcement systems.

The very fact that the IRA remains intact has also had a detrimental effect on Sinn Fein's prospects as a political force. Irish premier Bertie Aherne has stated on many occasions that Sinn Fein must 'resolve its relationship with the IRA before going into coalition with his party, Fianna Fail'[63]. Former Fine Gael leader Michael Noonan also made it clear that his party would not form a government with Sinn Fein in it.[64] Clearly violence as a habit at the organisational level, through the continued existence of the IRA and its attendant illegal structures, has also limited the political scope of its political front in its electoral role.

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[61] See 'Is The Peace Process Working?', Irish Herald, Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , September 9th 2002, where one resident criticises the IRA for not protecting them.
[62] Op. cit. Silke p. 83.
[63] For example in McDonald, H., 'Irish army can't police Armagh', Guardian newsunlimited, http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , January 14th 2001.
[64] Fahy, D., 'Sinn Fein 'military wing' obstacle to talks', Irish Times, February 10th 2001.

Perhaps strangely, the organised crime element in itself does not appear to have been flagged up as an electoral weakness as it is with the loyalist groups. This is because the IRA is not, ostensibly at least, using it for personal gain but for the 'noble' political cause. Moreover, there appears to be some sympathy with the view that this kind of activity has an air of legitimacy because it is undermining the 'illegitimate' British economic system. As one republican proclaimed:

> 'The emotional attachment of the men and women of West Belfast to this state is as it was at the time of partition – non-existent and growing cooler by the day. Generally speaking, they will lose little sleep over the news that a huge black economy is sucking the lifeblood out of the north because they don't see themselves as having a stake in a political arrangement which is so manifestly unsustainable.'[65]

Therefore organised crime in the IRA case is cloaked with political legitimacy and has not, it seems, undermined the group in the same way that such affiliations have undermined the UDA.

The 'unsustainability', referred to above, of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom is related to another important role for Sinn Fein – the orchestration of street violence. In the Summer of 2002, for example, it was said to be organising riots in North and East Belfast. There are a number of reasons behind this form of activity. Firstly, the political front has wanted to illustrate the republican argument that the statelet is

inherently unsustainable and so it has been the business of Sinn Fein to create instability and confrontation by stoking up sectarian tension in interface areas. The political front has also tried to manipulate sectarian tensions surrounding the marching season, once again to try to undermine the viability of the Northern Ireland statelet.[66] Secondly, the aim is to provoke the police into an overreaction, perhaps video the 'evidence', and then show it to the domestic and international audience, not only for propaganda purposes, but also specifically to justify the party's decision not to sit on the Policing Board of a police force that they could argue was no different from the 'oppressive' RUC. Thirdly, provoking 'state repression' would enhance their message that they were 'defenders of the Catholic community'.[67] The more hatred and tension, then the less sustainable the province would be.

The use of street violence is another example where the notion of 'violence as a habit' in the post-ceasefires period may have actually increased the utility of Sinn Fein in this respect because, as with punishment beatings, it provides a substitute activity for those who might normally have been engaged in terrorism. As Dingley noted 'street politics kept a lot of activists employed at a time when the peace process would have made them redundant.'[68] Sharrock and Devenport concur that Adams the tactician 'could contemplate the mayhem, tragedy and disruption which Drumcree 1996 brought into

[65] Livingstone, R., Irelandclick.com, website: http://www.nuzhound.com, July 4th 2002.
[66] For an excellent analysis on how Sinn Fein stokes up tensions in the marching season see Dingley J., 'Marching Down the Garvaghy Road: Republican Tactics and State Response to the Orangemen's Claim to March their Traditional Route after the Drumcree Church Service', Terrorism and Political Violence, Autumn 2002, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 42-79.
[67] Clarke, L., Broadening the Battlefield, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1987, p. 221.
[68] Op cit. Dingley p. 69. See also Harding, T., 'Sinn Fein accused of parade riot plot', news.telegraph.co.uk, website: http://www.telegraph.co.uk , July 12th 2002.

ordinary people's lives as an opportunity to be 'developed and exploited''.[69] Once again, however, this type of activity may be detrimental to that other fundamental role of the IRA's political front – its development as a political force on an all-Ireland basis.

In summary, the notion of violence as a habit was largely hidden in the turmoil of the early 1970s when Sinn Fein sat comfortably as the propaganda tool for a campaign of violence, however indiscriminate. In the 1980s it was clear that such violence restricted the utility of Sinn Fein, even when the party was being used as a tactical device. The dramatic increase in punishment beatings in recent years has arguably also not been conducive to the utility of the political front whose role has increasingly been one of securing votes at the ballot box. Alex Maskey for one has acknowledged this detrimental impact: 'I don't want it to happen at all. It offends, it hurts, and it is politically disastrous'.[70] This aspect of violence as a habit may have brought limited community support from people who condone vigilantism against drug dealers, for example, (after all this has been one of Sinn Fein's traditional roles) but it has hindered the party's efforts to gain a wider following at the ballot box. It has also limited its political options vis a vis any potential sharing of power in a coalition government in the Irish Republic, as indeed has the fact that the IRA has remained intact. It is clearly difficult to quantify the extent to which violence has become habitual, and also how much of an impact it has actually had vis a vis the utility of a political front. In general, however, the notion of violence as

[69] Sharrock, D., and Devenport, M., Man of War, Man of Peace, The Unauthorised Biography of Gerry Adams, Macmillan, 1998, p. 477.
[70] Quoted in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, To Serve Without Favor: Policing, Human Rights, and Accountability in Northern Ireland (London: Human Rights Watch 1997) p. 106, cited in Silke TPV article note 81, pp. 92-3.

a habit has had a negative, if not decisive, impact on the utility of Sinn Fein whose role has changed as mainstream republicanism has modernised itself.

## The Loyalist Groups

As stated above probably the best way to ascertain whether or not violence has become a habit both at the individual and organisational level is to identify activity that seems to have very little relation to political goals. In the cases of the loyalist groups, and especially the UDA, this activity is far more transparent than is the case with the IRA. It has been argued earlier that, at least to some degree, this is due to a weaker ideology and less disciplined and less centralised organisational structures.

As with the IRA, it is important to establish that loyalist violence and illegal activity has continued in the post-ceasefire period. The UDA has continued to be engaged in street disturbances as well as widespread attacks on Catholic homes,[71] and has continued to murder innocent Catholics purely on the basis of their religion.[72] The group has also been heavily engaged in punishment beatings.[73] Perhaps the most bitter episode of violence since 1998 has been the feud between the UDA and the UVF which left seven men dead and led to the reimprisonment of Johnny Adair for breaching the terms of his release license. The UDA's ceasefire was declared over by John Reid, the Secretary of State for

[71] See O'Farrell, J., 'Loyalists rearming for battle to come', Scotland on Sunday, May 12th 2002.
[72] Such as that of the Catholic postal worker, Daniel McColgan on 26th February 2002 and Gerard Lawlor on 22nd July 2002.
[73] See Bradley, M., 'Punishment attacks on youths almost doubled', The Irish Times, August 23rd 2001 and Murphy, C., ''Punishment' shootings, beatings rise sharply', The Irish Times, May 23rd 2001.

Northern Ireland, in 2001.[74] The UVF ceasefire officially remains intact (as at June 2003) but it was suspected of planting a fireball bomb that failed to detonate in Ballycastle, County Antrim in August 2001.[75] According to the PSNI, it has also been involved in orchestrating street violence and it too has engaged in punishment beatings.[76]

It is possible to relate some of this activity to political goals. For example, it could be argued that loyalists have become increasingly disillusioned with the peace process that they supported in 1998 - reflected in the ongoing sectarian murders and street violence (which is also linked to strengthening Protestant communities at the expense of Catholic ones). Sectarian activity, especially in the case of the UDA, is linked in a spurious way to the political goal of maintaining the union with the UK, and preventing unification with the Catholic South. However, there is much activity that does not appear to have any connection with the political goals of the organisations.

A Northern Ireland Special Branch source stated that loyalists have been tempted towards criminal activity as an end in itself.[77] The UDA, for example, has been involved in 'drug dealing, racketeering, the sale of illegal tobacco and stolen alcohol.'[78] It has also recently been reported that loyalists have been involved in a sixty million pound drugs haul that

[74] Although the organisation has claimed to be back on ceasefire (from March 2003).
[75] BBC News, 'UVF members linked to bomb', website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/1520556.stm , September 1st 2001.
[76] See BBC News, 'Paramilitaries blamed for violence', website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news , August 29th 2002 and Murphy, C., ' 'Punishment' shootings, beatings rise sharply', The Irish Times, May 23rd 2001.
[77] Special Branch source, interview.
[78] McDonald, H., 'UDA gang sends bomb 'message' to campaigner', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , September 8th 2002. See also, for example, BBC News, 'UDA ceasefire: 1994-2001', website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/1569237.stm , October 12th 2001.

was exposed by an international police effort in September 2002.[79] It is perhaps surprising that the loyalists have also carried out punishment beatings and have engaged in 'community policing' of its own, given that, as pro-state groups, one would assume that they would support the state police in dealing with crime. Silke, though, outlines the recent history of how the relationship between the loyalists groups and the police has deteriorated ever since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, when the violent backlash brought loyalists into conflict with their own police force.[80] This, along with a greater RUC emphasis on counter terrorism in loyalist areas, led to a failure on the part of loyalist communities to cooperate with a police force that they no longer trusted.[81] In fact loyalists have attacked the homes of policemen and women.

There is, however, another reason why loyalists are opposed to having the police around and why they mete out their own form of justice. They do not want their criminal empires exposed or interfered with by the lawful authorities. The UDA recently placed a pipe bomb under the car of a man who was trying to set up a police clinic in the Rathcoole Estate of North Belfast.[82] The group saw this as a direct threat to their drug dealing operations. Thus, it is far more convenient for the loyalist groups, at a time when they have increased their criminal activities, and when these activities have become more exposed as the political violence has receded, to deal with miscreants themselves, rather than have the state's police force, who might ask too many awkward questions, involved.

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[79] O'Kelly, B., 'Loyalists and Dublin criminals behind 80m drugs haul', Sunday Business Post online, website: http://www.thepost.ie/web/Home/index.asp , September 8th 2002.
[80] Silke, A., 'Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland', Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 11, No. 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 4-5.
[81] Ibid. p. 5.
[82] McDonald, H., 'UDA gang sends bomb 'message' to campaigner', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , September 8th 2002.

With the loyalist groups there appears to be more evidence (than in the IRA case) to suggest that there are reasons for the maintenance of the organisation and perpetration of violence other than ideological motivations. It is probably no exaggeration to suggest that they represent illegal fiefdoms that have hitherto used the political conflict to hide illicit activities. During the Troubles they have established a warlord type prestige amongst their leaders as well as acquiring sizeable and personal financial gains. This is particularly the case with the UDA. One drugs squad officer stated in 2002 that 'the UDA is now a major criminal empire'.[83] There is no reason why activity that is not linked to the political objectives of the organisation, and that may be more to do with sustaining such fiefdoms or with personal gain, should not continue during a peace process that is after all primarily concerned with a *political* settlement. Thus, an organisation may remain in existence to carry on with activities that had hitherto been given cover by the political conflict. As with the IRA's illegal supporting structures, the loyalist groups may also need to use violence to keep empires intact from predators.

Thus, this criminal activity that has become part and parcel of the loyalist paramilitary world, and that has little to do with political goals, has perpetuated the use of violence and the organisations' survival regardless of political objectives. In September 2002 the new PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde said 'there are a number of major players who

[83] Op. cit. O'Farrell.

have no visible means of support, who seem to go on some very nice holidays and who seem to have a terrifying grip on some of their communities.'[84]

This 'terrifying grip' is often manifested in vigilante activity that is undertaken to preserve the organisation. Silke states that:

> 'While the loyalist vigilante priority is to first and foremost maintain operational control over members as well as those on the periphery of the organisation, a significant amount of effort is also devoted to protecting the authority and prestige of the organisation within loyalist areas. In practical terms this ultimately involves 'punishing' anyone who defies commands issued by the organisation, who comes into conflict with members of the group, or who hinders – intentionally or accidentally – any of the group's activities ... The strong reaction is not because the group has especially strong feelings about a given individual, but because the group is responding to a perceived threat to the status of the entire organisation'[85]

Clearly this suggests that organisational survival seems to be more important than political goals.

While loyalist group activity has persisted largely to maintain illegal fiefdoms, and therefore to perpetuate organisations whose maintenance has become more important for organised crime purposes than the realisation of political goals, there is also a strong

[84] Quoted in McKittrick,D., 'Hugh Orde: Belfast's new man from the Met doesn't expect to be popular', The Independent, 2nd September 2002.

individual adherence to violence in the loyalist groups. With a weak ideological underpinning, the use of violence has become a particular source of prestige at the individual level for working class loyalists. Silke argues that:

> 'The standing individuals gain within their communities once they become paramilitary members is arguably the most tangible reward they will ever receive for membership. Certainly, this status is one of the most powerful attractions for potential recruits and it provides a powerful incentive to remain involved in the movement once an individual has joined. The status is not necessarily one of popularity. It is not about being admired or liked within the community. It is about being *respected* (author's italics) and about being taken very seriously by those around you.'[86]

One former loyalist, Dave Fogel, stated that 'I was walking around the streets with the power of life and death over people ...I must at times have been drunk with it. It wasn't the power that people have given you by votes but the power given you by violence.'[87] Certainly, without the powerful ideology associated with being an anti-state group, the loyalist groups and their members have been more prone to the charge of using violence for other purposes, such as personal prestige and the sustenance of illegal empires. Like republicans they have mainly been working class and so the UDA and the UVF have provided a chance for working class loyalists to escape from their social status, as Fromm's theory above suggests. The paramilitary culture that exists in many

[85] Op. cit. Silke, 'Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland' pp. 14-5.
[86] Ibid. p. 15.

communities has also led to teenagers aspiring to be members of the two groups. O'Farrell noted in May 2002 that:

> 'Both the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) are 'swamped' by young recruits, according to one former UVF prisoner. This is backed up by police sources.'[88]

As far as the individual adherence to the perpetration of violence is concerned one shouldn't forget that it is sometimes not through choice that young men join the UDA. Silke quotes one local source:

> 'The UDA press gangs seventeen-year-olds into their organization. If you get in trouble, they tell you to join the UDA. Last year one of my son's mates, who was seventeen, joined. Now he can't get out. He daren't speak about it.'[89]

This would appear to be another factor that accounts for the persistence of violence and organisational survival, though in the long term it is questionable as to whether such intimidatory tactics help preserve the group. In short, the less an organisation has existed to fulfil political goals the more its survival is likely to become an end in itself.

In summary, there has been much loyalist activity that bears little relation to political goals but has been more to do with sustaining 'mafia organisations'[90] and all the personal

[87] Fogel, D., quoted in Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 101.
[88] Op. cit. O'Farrell.

power, prestige and wealth that goes with them. This has entailed controlling loyalist communities and carrying out numerous punishment beatings. Clearly, when controlling their 'patches' (for extortion and racketeering purposes) is paramount organisational survival is imperative, regardless of the political environment. As this type of activity bears little relation to the political conflict and has little political orientation then it seems that there is no reason why it should have stopped during the peace process. In fact it has increased as the groups have found new ways to utilise their manpower.

## The Impact on the Loyalist Political Fronts

Before assessing the impact that these violence as a habit factors (adherence to organised crime and punishment beatings) have had on the utility of the loyalist political fronts, as with the republican case, it is worth reiterating what the role of these fronts has been. It has been argued elsewhere (chapter 9) that the main motivations for the use of loyalist political fronts has been to give working class loyalism representation and to explore ways that could result in a greater degree of accommodation between the two communities. With the former this would mean that loyalist workers would need to support the political fronts at the ballot box. With the latter the political fronts' proposals would have to be taken seriously by the main unionist parties to succeed. The two aspects of violence as a habit assessed here, punishment beatings and organised crime, have lessened the chances of the loyalist political fronts succeeding in either of these objectives, largely due to the 'law abiding' nature of Protestants. This particular

[89] Op. cit. Silke, 'Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland' p. 10.

'variable' has therefore reduced the utility of the loyalist political fronts. This has especially been the case when loyalist involvement with organised crime has had little to do with the realisation of political goals.

It is well known that these aspects of loyalist activity existed in the years before the ceasefires. During the peace process, however, they have become more exposed, whereas during the Troubles they were to some extent hidden by the political conflict. Thus it would also appear that these violence as a habit factors would have impacted on the groups' strategy vis a vis the use of a political front in the same way as they have done in the post-ceasefire period.

This is probably best exemplified by the case of the UDA in the 1980s. The organisation had become so heavily involved in racketeering that the UDA leadership was largely viewed as a corrupt bunch of gangsters, hardly an impression that facilitated the use of a political front in the face of a generally 'law abiding' Protestant population. Thus not only did the division of labour ethos (see chapter 9) militate against the use of a political front, but so too did the fact that the organisation was heavily engaged in organised crime. Unlike republicans, who have had no problem in undermining the 'illegitimate' economic system, there was no such questioning of the legitimacy of the status quo amongst the unionist population. Thus, whether the UDA's political fronts were established to give a voice to working class loyalism or to present innovative ideas, their utility was and has been restricted by its attachment to corruption and racketeering. Fewer

[90] As Assistant Chief Constable Alan McQuillan labelled them (quoted in 'Leading loyalist shot in face', BBC news, website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/2262658.stm , September 17th 2002.

'law abiding' Protestants, working class or not, would vote for such political fronts, and as a source of ideas they have not been taken seriously.[91]

The loyalist groups, however, weren't totally oblivious to the effect that continuing violence was having on the fortunes and therefore the utility of their political fronts. One of the reasons, argues Silke, that the groups introduced a system of fines against criminals in the Shankhill area rather than using physical violence was that it 'would take the pressure off the loyalist political parties ... who were coming under pressure because of punishment beatings and shootings carried out by the loyalists.'[92]

Nevertheless, violence as a habit has persisted more in the loyalist groups because less of their activity revolved around its political ideology. As Silke has argued:

> 'Over the course of the cease-fires the loyalist politicians have ridden the waves caused by the continuing illegal activities of the paramilitary groups they represent (e.g. extortion, racketeering, vigilantism, etc.) .... If they are to develop support among the wider Protestant population, the groups need to distance themselves from all the activities associated with paramilitarism, including vigilantism'.[93]

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[91] As Bruce argued of the UDA in Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 236.
[92] Op. cit. Silke, 'Ragged Justice: Loyalist Vigilantism in Northern Ireland' p. 16.
[93] Ibid. pp. 24-5.

## Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to assess the impact that the notion of 'violence as a habit' has had on the utility of the political fronts. Such violence includes ongoing terrorist activity, punishment beatings and shootings, and organised crime. The above has argued that violence has indeed become habitual at the individual level, evident in the sharp rise in punishment beatings in the post-ceasefire period. This to some extent, and particularly with the loyalist groups, is due to the personal prestige and power that individuals have been used to enjoying in the paramilitary world. At the organisational level organisational theory suggests that terrorist groups may continue to exist even when it might not be rational[94] for them to do so and that therefore a certain level of activity or substitute activity is necessary to sustain them. This is especially the case if leadership ambitions are tied in with the continued viability of the group. The extent to which violence has become *habitual* at the organisational level, however, is difficult to gauge in the case of the IRA because there may be strong *strategic* motives for the group to remain in existence. These include continuing to use the threat of violence for political leverage, and to continue to wield influence, and therefore remain relevant, 'on the ground'. Nor should one overlook the impact of the strong commemorative culture and transgenerational inheritance of the mantle of armed struggle that exists in the republican movement.

[94] Meaning that, all things considered (ie. military failure, sufficient concessions), it would not be logical to continue with terrorism were it not for such organisational processes. For further typologies of group behaviour see Post, J., Ruby, K., and Shaw, E., 'The Radical Group in Context: 1. An Integrated

Thus, there could be any number of strategic or ideological reasons why violence may have continued in the post-ceasefire period, but the notion that violence has also become habitual should not be overlooked. In order to assess the impact of this variable on the utility of the IRA's political front it is important to be clear about what Sinn Fein's role has been. Its functions have included 'community policing' and the use of street violence to stoke up tensions in the 'inherently unsustainable statelet'. This chapter has argued that since the ceasefires the notion of violence as a habit has actually increased the utility of the political front with regard to these particular roles.

In general, however, 'violence as a habit' has inhibited the utility of Sinn Fein. While punishment beatings and shootings may have brought localised support to the party they have hindered its attempts to establish itself as a significant all-Ireland organisation. Secondly, the fact that the IRA has remained intact has limited Sinn Fein's negotiating position vis a vis forming part of any potential coalition government in the South. The increase in beatings in the post-ceasefire period suggests that violence had to some degree become habitual and this might help account for the level of indiscriminate violence in the 1980s that compromised the utility of Sinn Fein as an electoral force. Organised crime has not been viewed by republicans as detrimental to its cause as, ostensibly at least, it has been geared towards the political goal. They do not have any moral qualms about participating in a black market that undermines the 'illegitimate' economic system. Broadly, however, violence as a habit, exemplified through the

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Framework for the Analysis of Group Risk for Terrorism', Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 25, No.2, March-April 2002.

increase in punishment beatings and shootings and through the continued existence of the IRA, has undermined the utility of the group's political front.

**The Loyalist Groups**

As noted above organisational theory suggests that terrorist organisations may continue to exist even when it is not rational for them to do so. Assuming that 'rationality' here refers to the political conditions or concessions that might warrant the disbandment of a group, then clearly whether or not it ceases to exist depends on the degree to which these groups are 'political' or on how much importance is attached to the political goal. This chapter has argued that the loyalist groups, and particularly the UDA, partly because of a weaker ideology as pro-state groups, are less political than the IRA and have been more inclined to establishing organised criminal empires as ends in themselves, using the political conflict as a cover. Therefore, any political settlement would not logically lead to an end to such activity nor the disbandment of the loyalist groups.

The 'law abiding' nature of the Protestant population, and its loyalty to the state, has meant that it has been more offended by loyalist organised crime. Clearly, this activity, the increase in punishment beatings, and the murders of innocent Catholics, has undermined the utility of the loyalist groups' political fronts when this utility has largely depended on the support of the wider unionist population.

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This section has argued that ideology, structure, leadership and the notion of 'violence as a habit' have all had an impact on the utility of the political fronts studied in this thesis. The IRA's potent ideology has facilitated a very centralised and hierarchical structure which in turn has, particularly through dual membership at leadership level, ensured that the political front has been tightly controlled by the Army Council. As an anti-state group this has enabled the organisation to utilise the front as a tactical tool to greater effect in its struggle against the British in Northern Ireland. Another crucial development behind the greater utilisation of the IRA's political front was the emergence of the new leadership in the Northern Command, and particularly Gerry Adams who 'was able to deal with the evolving situation'.[95] The survival of this leadership has enabled the political front to be further developed and utilised in new and innovative ways. This chapter has argued that the notion of violence as a habit has in general, however, been detrimental to the progress of Sinn Fein, whose role has increasingly become an electoral one. While it may have led to the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein's more traditional roles of 'community policing' and street violence it has hampered the party's efforts to broaden its electoral support North and South, and the potential it may have had or have in forming part of a coalition government in Dublin.

The loyalist groups have had a less alluring ideology, largely because they are pro-state. There have been a number of pro-union parties that represent similar political views and those with military or political talent would inevitably find themselves in the state's

security forces or one of these parties. For this reason the emergence of a gifted and innovative leadership that might use political fronts more effectively has been less likely. The weaker ideological commitment of the UDA has been a factor behind its fragmented and decentralised structure and it has been argued that this has militated against the utility of a political front. Although the UVF is more centralised both groups have suffered from a relatively weak dogma and a lack of ideological conviction that has allowed the development of organised criminal empires as ends in themselves. In the face of a 'law abiding' unionist population this 'violence as a habit' factor has militated against the utility of loyalist political fronts, particularly when this utility has been bound up with winning votes at the ballot box or as the means to present new ideas for ultimately ending the conflict. The next section will assess the impact of popular support, state response and other factors in the external environment on the utility of political fronts.

[95] As Sinn Fein councillor Michael Browne stated, interview.

# Section 3 - The External Environment

In Chapter 6 the degree to which the notion of 'violence as a habit' has impacted on the use or not of a political front was assessed. This of course largely depends on how much weight one accords to the 'instinctivist' origins of human aggression or organisational imperatives as potential reasons for the persistence of violence (therefore lessening the chances of a political front as a sign of moderation or even as a tactic). Likewise any assessment of the impact of the external environment on terrorist group strategy vis a vis the greater or lesser utilisation of a political front depends on how much one holds to the 'environmentalist' school of thought as an explanation for terrorist group behaviour. One might assume, for example, that if the conditions that led to the outbreak of violence in the first place persist then this may also lead to the inhibition of the use of a political front as a sign of moderation. Despite the role of internal factors, and most particularly the leadership in the case of the IRA, this thesis will argue that changes in the environment have been more fundamental in bringing about not only the greater utilisation of, but also new roles for, the 'political front'. As Crenshaw explains, terrorist groups are constrained by the 'social, economic and political givens of the situation', over which they may have no control. [1]

[1] Crenshaw, M. (ed.), Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power, Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 1983, p. 31.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 assess the impact of 'popular support', 'state response' and 'other factors in the environment' on the strategies of the IRA, UDA and UVF vis a vis their use of political fronts.

# Chapter 7 - Popular Support

This chapter will focus on the effect that the level of domestic popular support has had on the three groups' strategy vis a vis the use of a political front (the effect of international support will be assessed in Chapter 9). It will not primarily be concerned with those factors that in turn affect popular support, such as state response or other conditions in the external environment. These will be explored in later chapters for their impact on the level of support for the groups and thus their indirect effect on group strategy vis a vis the use of political fronts. It is argued that in the case of the IRA the desire to mobilise or tap perceived existing popular support has been the most significant of the variables behind the greater utility of its political front. Despite apparent ideological indifference to the level of support and the view that the 'only mandate republicans needed was the illegal British presence in 'our' country', the group has in fact been concerned with attracting a wider following within the Catholic community. On the loyalist side popular support has also been an important factor behind the emergence and utility of their political fronts in the sense that they sought to give representation to a potential support base that, it was perceived, had been disillusioned with its traditional political representatives (unionist politicians).

## The IRA

Despite its apparent (ideological) indifference to public support it will be argued that the IRA has always been concerned with attracting a wider following. One of the means it has used to achieve this is the adoption of left wing ideology which emphasises the 'mobilisation of the masses'. While the organisation has had genuine left wing adherents within its ranks, Marxism has also been used to generate popular support for the national object. This aspiration of mobilising support through left wing ideology, usually after the perceived failure in the use of violence, has necessarily led to greater 'political' involvement. Marxist dogma, however, despite the IRA's stated aim of achieving a socialist united republic, has not always so obviously been to the fore. The contradictions of a group that has courted the support of both the Catholic minority and the anti-communist United States for support, at the same time as espousing an atheist communist ideology has often obliged the IRA to play down its socialist credentials.

Whereas the desire to *mobilise* support has affected strategy so too has perceived *existing* support. It will be argued that the perception amongst Catholics, after loyalist attacks and perceived state acquiescence, of the IRA as the last line of defence led to Catholic ghetto support for a strategy of violence alone. Genuine fear of expulsion from their homes or worse meant that there was little time or room for politics. The type of government and security force response in the early seventies helped lead to popular support for the IRA's initial 'defence'[2] of the Catholic community.

[2] It is debatable as to how preoccupied with 'defence' the IRA was and how much it was rather more concerned with propaganda victories (ie. 'presenting an image of exacerbated crisis to disgrace the government' (O'Doherty, M. The Trouble With Guns, Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA,

The perceived existing support for the IRA after the Bobby Sands by-election victory of 1981 had a very different effect (when there was no fear of impending pogroms) prompting the organisation to engage in electoral politics. IRA proclamations that it represented the Catholic community meant that it had hitherto been very wary about pursuing an electoral strategy that could disprove these claims. The wave of sentiment that elected Sands as a member of parliament, however, dispelled these fears and prompted the IRA to tap this perceived support by going to the polls, albeit on an abstentionist basis. Thus, perceived popular support for the organisation can have different effects on IRA strategy under different circumstances.

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The roots of the IRA's popular support go back centuries through many generations of republican revolt against the British establishment. The response of Westminster to the Easter Rising of 1916, the behaviour of the infamous Black and Tans and the prospect of conscription were all significant factors behind the ballooning of Irish public support for the IRA's aim of ridding the island of the British. As such 'during the Anglo-Irish war, the IRA's greatest asset was the solid backing, or at least toleration, it received from the majority of the Irish people.'[3] After the partitionist settlement, however, the organisation found it difficult to sustain a level of popular support. Nevertheless, ever since the Government of Ireland Act was imposed there remained within Northern Ireland a minority that sought union with the South. Brian Lennon wrote that 'Northern

Blackstaff, Belfast, 1998, p. 81). O'Doherty's book challenges the notion of the IRA as 'community protectors'.

nationalists ... saw themselves as having been cut off from their fellow country men and women in 1920'.[4] Thus, although the IRA was never likely to appeal to the majority unionist population, it has always had a degree of 'fixed' support from a constituency that still sees the British presence in the 'Six Counties' as illegitimate, and the IRA's campaign of violence as justified.

Beyond this 'core constituency' were Catholics who were to '[inherit] sentimentality and tolerance towards the organisation, expressed in rebel songs and stories.'[5] Indeed, there are even suggestions of implicit support from the bulk of Northern Catholics from the belief that at best 'while they carry on' nothing will be imposed, like an internal settlement.[6]

It wasn't just sentimentality that contributed to the view of many Catholics that the British state was something alien to them. They had been excluded from exercising political power within Northern Ireland for all but the four months of Sunningdale in 1974 and the hitherto brief period in the current peace process. As Richard Rose argues, the unionists from the foundation of the regime did not seek to make it fully legitimate by attracting support from Catholics.[7] He also notes that subsequently 'at the most elemental level of equal protection of life, person and property, substantial departures from justice

[3] Smith, M., Fighting For Ireland? The Military Strategy Of The Irish Republican Movement, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 52.
[4] Lennon, B., After the Ceasefires, Catholics and the Future of Northern Ireland, Colombia press, Dublin, 1995, p. 20.
[5] Bishop, P., and Mallie, E., The Provisional IRA, London: Corgi, 1992, p. 151.
[6] See, for example, O'Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 96.
[7] Rose, R., Governing Without Consensus, An Irish Perspective, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, p. 93.

have existed for decades in Northern Ireland.'[8] His survey of Catholic attitudes (before the 'Troubles' began in 1969) revealed that three quarters of the minority population believed that they were discriminated against,[9] an observation that was reinforced by Fionnuala O'Connor's study in the early 1990s:

> 'Discrimination, fear of physical attack and conviction that the state was 'alien, not ours' are the themes that surface repeatedly when people talk about how they first became aware of being 'Northern Catholics'... 'For many older people, awareness of gerrymandering[10] and discrimination in housing and employment coincided with the realisation that employment in the public service would be on terms designed to remind them that they were powerless.'[11]

All this amounts to what Rose referred to as a 'fundamental antagonism' towards the state. Not only was there a natural constituency that felt 'cut off' from the 'South' in the first place but unionist discrimination and the perception that the British government ignored the plight of the powerless community did nothing to alleviate the situation and meant that the regime in Stormont was never going to be fully legitimate as long as the situation remained unchanged. As Rose concludes 'the relatively high vote in Northern Ireland [as compared with England] for anti-regime parties indicates that support [for the state] [was] less than unanimous there.'[12]

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[8] Ibid. p. 438.
[9] Ibid. p. 271.
[10] Gerrymandering is the term given to the manipulation of the borders of electoral constituencies to achieve a disproportionately greater number of seats.
[11] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 151.
[12] Op. cit. Rose p. 28.

Despite the opportunities that this gave the IRA to reap additional support, in the context of Northern Ireland, where unionists have formed the majority of the population and the SDLP was the majority Catholic political party until 2001,[13] the level of popular support for Sinn Fein and the IRA, even at its height, has not been substantial (Sinn Fein's vote never exceeding 20% until the 2001 Westminster election). The IRA was 'not going to swim in a sea of green support but would be forced to avoid contact with the angry Orange populace. Many areas were Nationalist but not necessarily sympathetic; without the support or toleration of a majority of the people, the IRA faced an almost insurmountable obstacle in Northern Ireland as a whole.'[14]

The lack of substantial or at least majority support did not dissuade the 'purists' after their defeat in the civil war. Unused to being in the minority they declared their indifference to the fact:

> 'The people of a nation may not voluntarily surrender their independence, they may not vote it away in the ballot box even under duress and if some, even a majority be found, who through force or cupidity, would vote for such a surrender, the vote is invalid legally and morally and a minority is justified in upholding the independence of their country.'[15]

It was they who were in the right and who or how many chose to follow them was immaterial. From these early days, therefore popular support has not been an ideological

[13] Sinn Fein eclipsed the SDLP in the 2001 Westminster election with 22% of the vote.
[14] Bowyer Bell, J., The Secret Army, The IRA, 1916-1979, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, pp. 284-5.

requirement. Henceforth many 'volunteers' believed that they needed no other justification for their actions other than the courage of their own convictions. The Irish public, misled by the pro-treatyite 'traitors', had strayed from the island's true destiny of a united republic. Yet, despite this apparent dogmatic indifference to popular feeling, and although the organisation has always been imbued with those militarists that see the level of popular support as immaterial,[16] it will be argued that the strategy of the organisation as a whole has in fact been affected by its level of support. Moreover, it is asserted that the organisation has made conscious attempts to mobilise support for its cause. Not only has the group been concerned with generating a popular following but it has also utilised the ballot box to tap perceived elevation in support. This chapter will examine the effect that the level of popular support, both from its core constituency and from the public at large, and the changes in these levels, has had on IRA strategy and more particularly on its attitude to engagement with the conventional electoral system.

Above all the IRA has been concerned with maintaining the support of its 'core constituency' – that is it's regular passive and active supporters. It has at different times also, as the self-appointed defenders of the Catholic population, been engaged in courting the sympathy of the whole minority population in Northern Ireland. Crenshaw has noted the need for terrorists' means to be appropriate for their ends.[17] The IRA, as a 'secular'

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[15] MacSwiney, M., quoted in The Politics Of Illusion, A Political History Of The IRA, by Patterson, H., Serif Publishers, London, 1997, p. 29.

[16] For example, see op. cit. Bowyer Bell, J., p. 277. IRA men Cronin and Murphy were unimpressed by Sinn Fein's success in the 1955 election, 'needing no further evidence than the courage of their convictions' for the justification of the cause. Also 'for [Marion] Price (cited in Cowan, R., 'I have no regrets', Guardian newsunlimited, website http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland, March 13th 2003), popularity is no measure of the legitimacy of a cause. 'The majority of Irish people have never supported the republican cause,' she admits. 'Most are not willing to make the sacrifices it requires. But as long as there is a British presence in Ireland there will always be justification.''

[17] Op. cit. Crenshaw p. 28.

group, will therefore by definition try not to alienate the Catholic public, evident by its target selection of security forces along with British symbols and figures, and its admission of 'mistakes'. Price, writing in the *Conflict Studies* journal of 1974, stated that 'Public revulsion at indiscriminate killings has often compelled the Provisionals to re-think their tactics and the most consistent targets over the past two years have been the SF [security forces] and the British public'[18], and more subsequently Eamon Collins wrote that:

> 'The IRA – regardless of their public utterances dismissing the condemnations of their behaviour from church and community leaders – tried to act in a way that would avoid censure from within the nationalist community; they knew they were operating within a sophisticated set of informal instructions on their behaviour, no less powerful for being largely unspoken.'[19]

By attempting not to alienate the Catholic public in this way (or at least by limiting its admonishment through apparently trying to limit civilian casualties) this has potentially facilitated a more political route.[20]

According to Coogan, the IRA was in fact concerned with attracting 'a sympathetic civilian population' as early as 1924, though the 1920s largely saw the disgruntled group

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[18] Price, P., 'Ulster: Consensus and Coercion, S.F. Attrition Tactics', Conflict Studies, No. 50, 1974, p. 15.
[19] Collins, E., Killing Rage, Granta, London, 1997, p. 295.
[20] As compared with a 'religious' or 'apocalyptic' terrorist group, where the notion that 'if you're not with us you're against us' prevails. Because the objectives of these groups are beyond what governments or states can grant the level of popular support outside the group is irrelevant. They are not looking for any material or secular gain that could be achieved with a degree of popular support. Indiscriminate violence, therefore, would not be an inappropriate means to the ends that such groups are seeking, whereas it would be for the IRA.

divorced from conventional politics through disillusionment with politicians and their 'betrayals'. Indeed, it was the continuing 'depletion of popular support' (through the policy of abstentionism) that prompted de Valera to break away from Sinn Fein and form Fianna Fail[21]. By the 1930s the IRA had revived an ideological strand – republican socialism - to also address the problem of dropping support. It was the reemergence of this tradition that, to the suspicions of the militarists in the movement, became synonymous with a more conventional political strategy. While embracing left wing dogma was tantamount to engaging in politics the underlying reason for political involvement was the desire to generate a wider public following for the national object through a political ideology that the IRA had hitherto been lacking. The new architect, Peader O'Donnell, a genuine proponent of socialism, was aware of the dangers of the creed being hijacked for pragmatic reasons: 'For O'Donnell, social discontent was not something that an existing republican leadership could use for its own purposes.'[22] Nevertheless, according to one assessment this is precisely what was happening:

> 'It was fairly clear that the IRA could not continue to live on its original base. The number of people who are prepared to imperil their lives and fortunes for the difference between the existing state ... and a Republic ... is negligible ... The men who wished to keep the IRA alive had therefore to look around for support springing from some other motives than the traditions of Irish independence and they found support in the widespread movement against the system of private property and enterprise.'[23]

[21] Op. cit. Patterson p. 34.
[22] Ibid. pp. 36-7.
[23] Ibid. p. 54.

Patterson argues that '*for the mainstream of the IRA leadership* ... O'Donnell's re-coding of republicanism in the language of class struggle held out the possibility of enlisting new masses for traditional objectives.'[24] (italics added) The organisation as a whole, with the exception of the 1960s, has not fully embraced Marxist ideology beyond the stated aim of a 'united socialist republic'. It did, however, see the potential in left wing dogma for the mobilisation of support for a united Ireland.

The depression of the 1930s enhanced this opportunity. 'The predominant tendency in the IRA', argues Patterson, 'looked to the annuities movement and to the intensification of problems of unemployment and agricultural depression as the material from which 'a second round' could be engineered. ... It was in many ways a land war disguised as a national struggle.'[25] The new direction met with some success according to an IRA document which described 'an amazing resurgence' with 'several companies and battalions [having] doubled and trebled their strength.'[26] The desire to court popular support, as with future IRA generations, had led the IRA to emphasise the 'socialism' aspect of its ideology, which in turn was synonymous with engagement in politics (O'Donnell's influence had led to the formation of Saor Eire in 1931 and the Republican Congress in 1934 [though the latter without the Army Council's blessing]. Cuman Poblachta na h-Eirean was established by the IRA as a response to the Congress).

Marxism in the IRA, however, was always a risky venture. To many 'militarists' in the movement (the IRA has rarely been a monolithic organisation in its strategic outlook)

[24] Ibid. p. 56.
[25] Ibid. p. 54.
[26] Ibid. p. 55.

politics has been seen as anathema. More significantly, however, and as noted earlier, the new ideology was flawed by a number of contradictions. Firstly, 'atheist' communism was anathema to the Catholic community that it was part of and claimed to protect. In fact, under IRA regulations members could not be communists.[27] Secondly, it ignored the fact that, as Rose points out, the sources of tension in 'Northern' society (evident in the sectarian riots of the 1930s) emanate from religious divisions and not class ones.[28] Thirdly, and this was to become increasingly relevant in subsequent generations, socialist credentials were hardly an asset when drumming up support for the republican movement in the United States, particularly after the Second World War and the emergence of the Cold War with communist Russia.

In the 1930s it was the first of these contradictions that led to attacks from the Catholic Church and community for espousing an anti-Catholic ideology.[29] This, along with De Valera's victory limited the appeal of republican socialism (Soar Eire had largely been a response to Cosgrave's 'repressive regime'). Fianna Fail's rise to power promised the realisation of many of the IRA's objectives but the latter was concerned that much of its support was sapped by the new 'republican' administration. The desire to retain it was temporarily satisfied through the emergence of Eoin O'Duffy's 'Blueshirts' and so 'Irish fascism represented the issue that would allow the IRA to take the initiative against de Valera's increasingly successful incorporation of its constituency.'[30]

[27] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie, p.58.
[28] Op. cit. Rose p. 285.
[29] See op. cit. Patterson pp. 59-60.
[30] Ibid. pp. 63-4.

Despite the failure of the 1930s political projects, even if the IRA wanted to distance itself from 'lefties', it nevertheless acknowledged that the main reason behind the failure of Sean Russell's bombing campaign of 1939 was its inability to harness popular support, and it was the desire to remedy this that was the major factor behind the adoption of Sinn Fein as its political front. This step did not in any way represent moderation on the part of the IRA, for the group had decided in 1948 to prepare for another military campaign.[31] Neither was it another attempt to rejuvenate republican socialism. Sinn Fein was adopted as a front for a strategy of violence, serving as a mouthpiece for the armed struggle. Patterson notes that 'most IRA members were, of course, little interested in social philosophy, Marxist, Catholic or otherwise. Most would have been practising Catholics with no time for politics, particularly if they were tainted by 'communism' (a 'capacious term' in post-war Ireland)'. They were dedicated to 'reunification by physical force'.[32]

The impressive showing at the polls in 1955 provided the IRA with the popular support that they had sought to generate and was seen as giving them the popular mandate and moral authority for the use of force.[33] But 'as the futile campaign sputtered on, producing only internment ... and a massive mobilisation of the police and 13,000 B Specials, interest and sympathy evaporated.'[34] By 1959 the Sinn Fein vote had slumped. As a front for the IRA and as the voice for a strategy of violence, its electoral fortunes suffered a substantial drop. As part and parcel of the strategy of violence the political front sank with the failed Border campaign. The main reason for this failure in the armed struggle,

[31] Ibid. p. 86.
[32] Ibid. p. 87.
[33] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell p. 269.
[34] Op. cit. Patterson, p. 92.

as the IRA itself admitted, was 'the attitude of the general public'.[35] If the struggle were to continue a reassessment of republican strategy was needed and it was to be driven by the need to recoup lost support.

Cathal Goulding, under the influence of the left wing intellectual Roy Johnston, felt that the grievances of workers were being ignored and sought to revive the tradition of republican socialism. This would ultimately lead to a more political strategy once more but Sinn Fein would no longer be used as a propaganda tool that mobilised popular support for the armed struggle and the national object. Nor would there be a repeat of the 1930s where left wing ideology was utilised by a pragmatic leadership to generate a wider following for national unification. The failure of the Border Campaign led to a reassessment that would ultimately attempt to lead the republican movement down the leftward path, away from Irish unification as the primary objective and eventually away from the armed struggle.

The new route became synonymous with a more political strategy much to the annoyance of the more traditional hardliners in the North. This approach, however, did not just entail 'developing Sinn Fein, involving members in social, economic and civil rights campaigns'[36] but also led to the whole movement becoming politicised. According to Patterson by May 1966 'little progress had been made in developing Sinn Fein as a relatively independent political organisation and most educational work was being carried out inside the IRA.'[37] This meant that the nature of the relationship between Sinn Fein

[35] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell p. 334.
[36] Op. cit. Patterson p. 151.
[37] Ibid. p. 106.

and the IRA had changed and was very different to that of the subsequent PSF and PIRA. At this time Sinn Fein was no longer the propaganda tool for a strategy of violence, but was swept along behind the IRA leadership's preoccupation with Marxism and the ultimate recession of the use of violence. Its utility was restricted by the fact that the *whole* movement was becoming more political. The divisions between Dublin and the Northern brigades of the IRA culminated in a split over the decision by the Special IRA Convention in December 1969 to end abstention and send elected Sinn Fein candidates to the parliaments in Dublin, Belfast and London. Edgar O'Ballance wrote that since the 1930s there were two distinct pressure groups within the IRA, one for military action and the other 'that somehow wants to associate itself with the people in a communist manner.'[38] The 1969 split represented the largest rupture to date between the two.

Left wing ideology had taken hold in what was to become the 'Official' movement and this was synonymous with a greater political strategy through Sinn Fein but not this time as the means to mobilise support for the national cause but with genuine conviction for a communist triumph prior to unification. Sinn Fein's role was transformed into mobilising support to that end:

> 'Thus the 1967 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis, in line with a previous decision by the August IRA gathering, amended the party's constitution to define its aim as the establishment of a Socialist Republic. That year would also see the organisation establish a number of citizens' advice bureaux and, most importantly, the Dublin Housing Action Committee, which quickly mobilised a considerable popular constituency through a

[38] O'Ballance, 'IRA Leadership Problems', Wilkinson, P. (ed.), British Perspectives On Terrorism, Allen

campaign which focused on the contrast between the housing crisis and the unprecedented level of office building in the city.'[39]

The new 'Provisional' movement, however, continued to use Sinn Fein as the propaganda tool for violence. Developments from 1969 onwards created an environment that ensured that the role of the political 'front' in the early 1970s was restricted to that of spokesperson for the continuing armed struggle.

The Provisionals set about transforming a conflict that revolved around the demand for civil rights within the United Kingdom into a call for the end of any connection with Westminster - for the 'Troubles' did not evolve from the British presence in Northern Ireland but from the denial of Catholic civil rights by a sectarian unionist regime. As Kelley states 'hardly anyone in Ireland was then [August 1969] conducting a serious anti-partition campaign'.[40] This is crucial to explaining the fall in popular support for the IRA and its strategy of violence in the 1970s as reforms increasingly addressed Catholic grievances. Economic and civil rights remedies that addressed the true nature of the discontent in Northern Ireland undermined the appeal of unification, echoing times past when John Dillon (a dominant anti-Parnellite of the 1890s) feared settlement of the land question would reduce support the Irish peasants would give to nationalism.[41] Fearing the Land Act, he believed '...that the land trouble is a weapon in nationalist hands and that to settle it finally would be to risk Home Rule, which otherwise must come.'[42] Likewise once unionist prejudice in housing, jobs and political representation dissipated the IRA's

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and Unwin, London, 1981, p. 77.
[39] Op. cit. Patterson p. 113.
[40] Kelley, K., The Longest War, Northern Ireland and the IRA, Zed Press, London, 1982, p. 122.

support dropped. The vast majority of Catholics had wanted a say in Northern Ireland, they didn't want to destroy it.[43]

At the beginning of the 1970s, however, popular support for the Provisional IRA did not derive from any left wing sympathies but from the nature of the loyalist, unionist and state response to the civil rights marches in the province (see chapters 8 and 9). This increased level of support for the organisation did not, however, lead to the greater utilisation of its political front, Provisional Sinn Fein. This was because the perceived impending physical threat to the Catholic population did not require politics or diplomacy but physical protection and the Provisionals were there to provide it.[44] It was the wholehearted backing of the Catholic 'ghettos' in the early days of the conflict that was a key ingredient for a successful strategy of violence alone, with the Provisional Sinn Fein's role restricted to 'performing propaganda work on behalf of the IRA.'[45] This high level of popular support and the surge in recruits and resources that it brought about helped the organisation to believe that victory was 'just around the corner'[46] and that they were engaged in a short war.

Popular support, then, evident through both increased recruitment and resources, did indeed lead to the perceived success in the use of violence and dictated that the IRA

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[41] Bew, P., Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, Clarendon, Oxford, 1987, p. 16.
[42] Ibid. p. 102.
[43] This is notwithstanding groups like People's Democracy and figures like Michael Farrell who sought revolution rather than reform (see op. cit. Rose p. 159).
[44] There was a genuine belief that the Catholic area of Short Strand 'would have been razed that night' were it not for the IRA along with 'Citizens' Defence Associations' (see Taylor, P., Provos, The IRA And Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997, p. 77). Nevertheless, the idea that the IRA were 'community protectors' in general is questionable (see note 2).
[45] Op. cit. Kelly p. 127.
[46] Meehan M. (IRA commander in 1975), quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 135

should continue with its violence alone strategy. Patterson argues that the post 1969 influx of recruits 'soon ensured the Provisionals an easy numerical predominance'.[47] The Lower Falls curfew, the imposition of internment without trial and Bloody Sunday (see chapter 8) all enhanced Catholic support for the group. With the establishment of the ghettos the 'volunteers' did not even have to stay in hiding or conceal their identity. As Kelley remarks:

> 'The guerrillas made no pretence of being an elitist avant-garde. In those early days, practically everyone in a Catholic neighbourhood knew who was involved with the 'ra' ...Very few people would even consider informing on these children, uncles, fathers, wives, sisters, cousins, brothers-in-law, friends, comrades. IRA volunteers were widely respected for their courage and patriotism, and they were not looked upon as any kind of alien or menacing force that had been imposed on the community ...the guerillas were well protected by their communities and could not be readily identified by any outsider.'[48]

The IRA, it seemed was emerging 'as the army of the Catholic people.'[49]

It was the high level of popular support for the IRA in the early 1970s, therefore, that led to the emergence of the Catholic ghettos which in turn led to what was one of Sinn Fein's earliest roles – that of vigilantism or what has been termed as 'community policing'. As the security forces of the state were increasingly seen as unacceptable, untrustworthy and

[47] Op. cit. Patterson p. 145.
[48] Op. cit. Kelley p. 141.
[49] O'Brien, C., States Of Ireland, Anchor Press, London, 1972, p. 280.

unwelcome by republican communities it was the IRA that willingly[50] and increasingly implemented an alternative law and justice system, that involved punishment beatings and shootings as the means to deal with not just social nuisances but those who would dare to stand up to the group. As Silke maintains (in chapter 6) the coordination of vigilante activity has been one of Sinn Fein's most important roles. The political front was very much the first point of contact for those who had a grievance, whether it be for burglary, joy riding or any other 'social' nuisance that the state's police force would normally deal with.

Not everyone agreed that the 'volunteers' were regarded with such esteem by Catholics. Connor Cruise O'Brien argued that 'most people, while resentful of the British Army [before Bloody Sunday] seemed still to shrink from the ferocity of the IRA and were shocked by certain actions.'[51] In the Republic, he suggests, anti-IRA feeling hardened quickly, even after Derry [Bloody Sunday], and on the 10th March the IRA announced a 3 day 'truce' apparently 'conscious of the trend of public opinion.' [52] Bishop and Mallie also state that by the Spring of 1972 Catholic attitudes to the IRA began to change with 'the sympathy [it] had gained after internment ... wearing off'.[53]

Sean MacStiofain, however, recollects that in the Spring of 1972 the IRA was 'in the best state it had been for fifty years in terms of men, ammunition, equipment and morale ... we were winning'[54]. This may have been more a reflection of the previous couple of

[50] Republican 'community policing' has also been ideologically compatible and useful for the IRA as it sustains its view that the state's jurisdiction in Northern Ireland is illegitimate (see state response chapter).
[51] Op. cit. O'Brien p. 279.
[52] Ibid. pp. 285-6.
[53] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 221.
[54] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 135.

years support that had paid dividends in terms of recruits and resources, rather than Catholic opinion at the time. Nevertheless, the perception was that the IRA had the support of the Catholic community in what they did. In summary, Sinn Fein's role was therefore restricted for two reasons. Initially, the Catholic population, rightly or wrongly, feared for their immediate safety and so turned to the 'ra' for 'defence', and secondly the resources and recruits that emanated from this support were key factors in a successful strategy of violence alone with no need for reevaluation (as in the 1930s or 1960s) that might involve greater utilisation of 'politics'. A 'short war' would mean that politics was for the time being unnecessary and irrelevant, though, as noted above, this did not mean that the political front did not have other important functions.[55]

As the conflict continued PIRA continued to be aware of public opinion. As Price argued above the 'public revulsion at indiscriminate killings has often compelled the Provisionals to re-think their tactics and the most consistent targets (over the past two years [ie. up to 1974]) have been the SF [security forces] and the British public.'[56] However discriminate the apparent target selection was supposed to be by the end of 1974 the organisation was getting increasingly unpopular, even in the ghettos.[57] Certainly the removal of the perceived threat of imminent loyalist pogroms and a more successful state response in dealing with the IRA led to a decline in the support base of the group, evident in the shortage of recruits by 1976.[58]

[55] Its propaganda and 'community policing' roles, for example. As noted above little emphasis on a political strategy did not necessarily mean a redundant political front.
[56] Op. cit. Price p. 15.
[57] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 269.
[58] See op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 213.

It was the drop in popular support that was to be a crucial factor behind the Long War strategy. Indeed, Patterson agrees that 'one of Adams' major concerns about the situation of the Provisionals ... was their growing isolation from the majority of people in the Catholic ghettos.'[59] Adams was worried that 'the rate of attrition is increasing in Republican areas and the Brit news media is spreading stories to increase the confusion within the ghettos ... The Brit intends to isolate us from the people' [60]. The 'war machine', therefore, needed to be surrounded by a 'popular infrastructure'[61].

Whereas the substantial degree of popular support had facilitated the IRA's strategy in the early 1970s, the fall in this following also had repercussions. Once more it was the failure to sustain its level of support that had contributed to the perceived failure of a strategy of violence alone. This led to a reevaluation that emphasised the need to mobilise a wider following for the IRA's struggle. Once more, despite the recent memories of the Goulding 'betrayal', the Long War strategy appeared to be an attempt to rejuvenate Marxism. In a speech written by Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison, Jimmy Drumm, a senior republican, stated at the 1977 Wolfe Tone commemoration that the working class:

> 'in the 26 counties' needed to be mobilised and that 'we need a positive tie-in with the mass of the Irish people ... We need to make a stand on economic issues and on the everyday struggles of people. The forging of the strong links between the Republican movement and the workers of Ireland and radical trade unionists

[59] Op. cit. Patterson p. 190.
[60] Adams G., quoted in Patterson op. cit. p. 191.
[61] Op. cit. Patterson p. 191.

will create an irrepressible mass movement and will ensure mass support for the continuing armed struggle in the North.'[62]

Whilst no doubt designed to stave off dropping support these left wing sentiments did not endure for long. If the organisation was to make progress in drumming up support in America and in the Catholic South overt socialism was out of the question. In 1984 Adams stressed the importance of American support 'in the future when we will want international recognition for a new government of a new Irish state.'[63] In 1986 he admitted 'I don't think socialism is on the agenda at all at this stage except for political activists of the left. What's on the agenda now is an end to partition. You don't even get near socialism until you have national independence.'[64]

By the time that the hunger striker Bobby Sands was fighting the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election the IRA had failed to generate the popular support they had hoped to achieve through the Long War strategy. One supporter remarked that 'the limitations of the Provisionals' campaign had become evident. It was now seen by larger and larger sections of the ghetto population as getting nowhere, more and more out of control and a source of unnecessary hardship.'[65] Sands' victory, however, was seen by the IRA as evidence of substantial support for the republican movement and the armed struggle, although the truth is many voters may have had other motives. Sands' canvassers had campaigned on the basis that a vote for him was a humanitarian one, not a vote for the

[62] Drumm, J., quoted in op. cit. Patterson p. 180.
[63] Adams G., quoted in 'We've Got the Spectators Involved', Newsweek, January 16th, 1984.
[64] Op. cit. Patterson p. 205.
[65] Foley G (IRA supporter in the mid 1970s), quoted in Patterson op. cit. p. 192.

IRA.[66] Moreover, he was nominated as an H Block candidate, not as a Sinn Fein one and, with no SDLP candidate to vote for, some Catholics simply wanted to register a vote against the unionists. O'Brien wrote in The Observer newspaper the following June:

> 'People didn't vote for the IRA: they voted for a humanitarian resolution of the H Block situation. They voted for Sands, not in his aspect as an officer in an organisation which had been systematically murdering their Protestant neighbours, but in his aspect as a suffering victim, in order to save his life. Also they didn't vote *for* Sands; they voted *against* Harry West. They voted according to their tradition, for the Catholic candidate to keep the Protestant out.'[67] (writer's italics)

The important thing as far as IRA strategy was concerned was that, despite these caveats, the group, with some justification, perceived the vote as a moral mandate for the use of violence. The prospect of tapping and even developing this support was the key factor behind the 'bullet and ballot box' strategy of the early 1980s and the subsequent removal of abstentionism from the Dublin parliament in 1986. The 1980s saw an unprecedented role for Sinn Fein as the political front for the republican movement, primarily because the republican leadership saw the opportunity of mobilising support for the national cause both North and South of the border. The desire to utilise and mobilise further popular support was key to the greater utilisation of the political front as an electoral tool.

The IRA has long claimed to represent the Catholic population, especially after their 'defensive' role in the early 1970s. This has meant that they had everything to lose by

[66] Op. cit. Provos p. 241.

putting this assertion to the test, particularly when the reality was that it would be disproved by the SDLP, and not much to gain because they had in any case already claimed to represent the minority community. A longstanding reason, therefore, for the IRA's refusal to adopt an electoral strategy has been fear of failure.[68] The 'risk of humiliation' was too great to take part in the district council Assembly elections of 1973 despite resentment that the SDLP was taking all of the nationalist vote.[69] In the late 1970s 'even the most militant supporters of 'active' republicanism shrank from the possibility of electoral rejection'[70], while Sinn Fein were concerned about the repurcussions of a Sands defeat in the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by election.[71] The truth was that up to 1981 most republicans knew that their proclamations, claiming to receive public support from the Catholic population, bore no relation to reality.

That is until Sands' victory. In the end 'it took the unwelcome initiative of the prisoners in starting a hunger strike for political status to force a reluctant leadership into electoral politics.'[72] Sands' success conquered the IRA's fear of losing at the ballot box and the organisation now believed that it could credibly claim to represent a substantial constituency, a claim that they would have found difficult to substantiate in the past. Adams acknowledged that 'the political campaign is important ... because it shows the size of Sinn Fein's and the IRA's support. Before that, the IRA was dismissed as a 'tiny group of criminals.''[73]

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[67] O'Brien, C.C., 'A choice of risks in Ulster', The Observer, June 7th 1981.
[68] This was confirmed by Belfast Sinn Fein councillor Michael Browne (interview).
[69] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 265.
[70] Op. cit. Patterson p. 193.
[71] See Bew, P., and Gillespie, G., Northern Ireland, A Chronology Of The Troubles, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, p. 147.
[72] Op. cit. Patterson p. 193.
[73] Adams, G., quoted in Clifton, T., 'We've Got the Spectators Involved', Newsweek, January 16th 1984.

The problem, however, for Sinn Fein was that this level of support had to be sustained. Any fall in the republican vote would undermine the (in any case spurious) claim that the IRA represented the Catholic population. Electoral success, therefore, had to be sustained if there was not to be a further reevaluation of republican strategy. Failures at the ballot box would serve to strengthen the hand of those within the movement who disapproved of any kind of 'politics' and would thus undermine the political front. Danny Morrison's defeat in the European election was just such a setback[74] and one report suggested that the IRA was 'riddled with dissent since the elections to the European Parliament ... when their vote collapsed'.[75] Whereas popular support for the republican movement generated by the hunger strikes had prompted it to adopt the electoral route, any decline in following would also have had ramifications on strategy and put pressure on this more 'political' path.[76]

John Hume's New Ireland Forum and the Anglo-Irish agreement that it spawned (see chapter 8) did hamper Sinn Fein's electoral performance leading some in the movement to further question the efficacy of 'politics'.[77] Yet ultimately the political experiment was always threatened by the contradictions of the dual-track strategy. The support that Sinn Fein hoped to sustain and develop was increasingly undermined by IRA violence and especially by its 'mistakes'. Atrocities such as those of Harrods, Enniskillen and Warrington caused public outrage that inevitably cost Sinn Fein votes. It was a no win situation for the party. 'Mistakes' and civilian casualties would cost votes, electoral

[74] See op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 181.
[75] Ryder, C., 'The hawks win internal IRA power struggle', Sunday Times, September 9th 1984.
[76] See McKittrick, D., 'Poll defeats push republicans towards greater violence', The Independent, February 5th 1990.

decline would strengthen the hand of the traditional 'militarists' to pursue further violence, and this would put yet more pressure on the political strategy.

The contradictions between the two tracks of republican strategy were to become evident to Adams himself and it was this realisation that led to strains within the movement and was ultimately to see moderation in the movement's attitude towards the use of violence. The tensions were manifest in Adams' repeated warnings to his fellow republicans that civilian deaths at the hands of the IRA threatened the electoral fortunes of Sinn Fein[78], which had declined by 1989, and thwarted his objective of broadening the support base of the movement. To some though, wrote Mary Holland at the time, IRA bombs and its 'mistakes', such as the killing of sixteen year old Charles Love in January 1990, were a reminder that the military 'wing' would not be dictated to by Adams and his 'political' cohorts, and that Sinn Fein very much remained the junior 'wing' of the movement.[79] While the desire to tap and mobilise popular support had brought the political dimension to fruition, and was certainly fundamental in the movement's greater use of Sinn Fein, it was not going to be allowed to have the type of impact that would have permitted the political front to eclipse the 'army'.

The movement has never seen, and possibly still doesn't see, democratic politics as the way to do business. Certainly, in the 1980s it did not have enough faith in politics as the means to achieve its goals. It therefore did not gamble on giving Sinn Fein anything but a subordinate role in case the movement became victim to electoral defeat or 'broken

[77] Such as Adams' former prison ally Ivor Bell, and Ruairi O Bradaigh, who eventually left the mainstream movement (over its decision to abandon its policy of abstention from the Irish Dail) to form Republican Sinn Fein.

promises' from 'deceitful politicians'. The Army Council therefore ensured that the military machine remained intact and very much the ascendant partner. As John Hume noted 'the real power in the republican movement lay with the IRA's Army Council. This position was maintained for as long as it seemed possible that the Hillsborough Agreement (the Anglo-Irish Agreement) would seriously erode Sinn Fein's support base.'[80]

Sinn Fein's conference of 1991 was 'subdued' through its loss of support[81] – the very support that had given the party its elevated role. Such was the frustration with the effect of IRA actions on electoral performance that 'a certain distancing' from 'some types of IRA violence ... [was] thought helpful. After the IRA's attack on Musgrave Park Hospital in November 1991, David McKittrick wrote:

> 'The attack within a hospital is also further confirmation that the IRA has become increasingly heedless to public opinion and is prepared to contemplate actions that some years ago its leaders would have rejected as politically counter-productive.'[82]

Such attacks could not continue if Adams' 'political' ambitions were to be realised. The IRA militarists may have been uncomfortable with the growing influence of the 'politicos' but it seemed that they had a choice – to become increasingly isolated from the Catholic population whom they purported to defend and who they had relied on for support in the past, or to give Adams' strategy a chance.

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[78] See 'Killing of civilians alienates voters, Adams warns IRA', Independent, 30th January 1989.
[79] Holland, M., 'Act of heartbreaking folly in Derry', The Irish Times, January 31st, 1990.
[80] Op. cit. Patterson p. 200.

It soon became clear that if the group wanted to bring Irish unification any nearer then it could not simply brush aside adverse Catholic reaction - not only to its 'mistakes', but also to its horrific new tactic. Peter Taylor argues that the use of the 'human bomb' by the IRA in 1990:

> 'increased a groundswell for peace that the IRA could not ignore. After twenty years of 'war', it was becoming increasingly clear that a considerable section of the community on which the Provisionals relied for their support, and whom they had originally come into existence to defend, had had enough. By actions such as this and the revulsion they provoked within the community, the IRA inadvertently strengthened the hand of those within the Republican Movement who argued that an alternative route to 'armed struggle' had to be found ... [Martin McGuinness believed] that the 'war' had to be just and supported by the people on whose behalf it was being fought.'[83]

Thus, popular support or lack of it, real or perceived, had helped lead to a reevaluation of strategy in the 1960s, had helped to determine a strategy of violence alone in the early seventies, had contributed to the notion of a 'Long War' in the mid seventies, had led to a more political strategy in the early 1980s and had increasingly pressurised the IRA to end their campaign of violence by the 1990s.

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[81] McKittrick, D., 'Sinn Fein faces future beseiged by self-doubt', The Independent, 4th February 1991.
[82] McKittrick, D., 'IRA turns its back on public opinion', The Independent, 4th November 1991.
[83] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 317.

The failed campaign of 1956-62 led to a reappraisal of IRA strategy that sought to recoup popular support, although this was ultimately not to be for national unification as the main priority. Although the polarization of the conflict in the early 1970s militated against 'politics' the political front's 'community policing' role did (and continues to), represent, at least to some degree, the desire of republican communities to have an alternative law and order or vigilante system, primarily to deal with 'social nuisances'. It was the fear of being isolated from the community that prompted Gerry Adams to launch the so-called 'Long War' strategy that was to entail a much more substantial role for the IRA's political front and it was the desire to tap perceived existing support after the Sands by-election victory that prompted an even greater role for Sinn Fein, this time as an electoral tool.

At the same time Sinn Fein failures such as losing West Belfast in the 1992 election, according to Rick Wilford, meant that there was no doubt 'that the politicos in the movement will cede to those more intent on the continuing or indeed the escalating use of violence.'[84] Popular support that had prompted the movement to use the electoral route was followed by a decline in support that, conversely, led some republicans to question the political project. In the end Adams' strategy survived, though not without the splits of 1986 and 1997.

To this day Sinn Fein has been utilised to generate greater popular support through the ballot box, not only in Northern Ireland but also in the Irish Republic. While it managed to eclipse the SDLP for the first time in the Westminster election of 2001, it also

[84] Wilford, R., quoted in op. cit. Patterson p. 238.

campaigned energetically in the South in 2002 to secure five seats in the Irish Dail. There are a number of reasons for this electoral success. Although Sinn Fein has gained the reputation for being the hardest working party on the ground, mobilising support and dealing with local issues, it has been the legitimacy accorded to the republican movement through the peace process (see chapter 8) that has been fundamental in bringing about greater support for the party. The sponsorship of Sinn Fein by the British, Irish and American governments (see chapter 9) has had a telling effect. Westminster's desire to keep republicans on board the peace process has given the party the mantle of being the 'tough lawyer' for the Catholic community (as opposed to the 'weaker' SDLP) while the highly prestigious trips to the White House by Sinn Fein leaders have shown the electorate where the real influence lies in terms of reaping benefits for the minority population (see chapter 9).

This thesis argues that popular support, despite ideological claims, has been the most significant of the variables behind the use of the IRA's political front, whether or not this greater utility has represented a sign of moderation towards the use of violence. Indeed, the adoption itself of Sinn Fein in 1948 by the IRA was to generate a wider following. Popular support continues to be of key importance to the group and this is evident in Sinn Fein's continuing role in vigorously mobilising support in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland.

## The Loyalist Groups

This thesis argues that one of the main motivations for the use of loyalist political fronts has been to give working class loyalism representation, especially after it had been 'manipulated' by 'respectable' politicians. It is in this respect that one could argue that these political fronts were established to tap perceived existing support or at least a potential constituency of support, although, of course, the electoral forays of these fronts failed miserably. Through the desire to represent working class loyalists perhaps it should come as no surprise that some of these fronts exhibited socialist credentials as against the 'right wing' unionism that had 'let loyalists down'.

Indeed, in the case of the UDA it was so interwoven in terms of structure and membership with the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW) that one might have expected that any electoral engagement by the former would have automatically supplied it with a ready made electoral base. This wasn't to be the case for the many reasons outlined in chapter 9. The UVF's Progressive Unionist Party also saw itself as representing the working class. The whole problem with socialism was the perception within unionism as a whole (see chapter 9) that it was something that Catholics did – through the Social and Democratic *Labour* Party and the 'communist' IRA and this is one of the reasons, in a religiously divided society, that attempts to utilise their working class credentials at the ballot box met with little success. Nevertheless, the desire to tap perceived popular support or to give the loyalist working class political representation was a fundamental reason for the emergence of the loyalist political fronts.

## The UDA

There is no doubt that from its creation the Ulster Defence Association had close links with the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW). Indeed, Boulton went as far as to suggest that LAW was, in effect, the UDA's political wing.[85] The latter was a working class body that took on the structure of the local union. As McAuley stated in chapter 4 'it is important to note that the paramilitary groups, and the subsequent community groups developed from the same base. Often they relied upon the same people and drew upon the same physical structure.'[86] Thus the popular support base, and potential electoral base, of the UDA stemmed from these links as well as from, to a lesser extent, those that they had 'defended' in the early days of the Troubles.

Nevertheless, the UDA did not take on the hue of a revolutionary vanguard movement that sought to overthrow their unionist establishment. Nor was it one that sought to challenge the political status quo. That is because the allegiance of working class loyalists was still to the Protestant government, such was the sectarian nature of the division in Northern Ireland (see chapter 9). As such there was initially no desire to seek political representation other than that that constitutional unionism provided.

Despite this the signs that the UDA were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the traditional arrangement between working class loyalists and constitutional unionism were there. As early as 1972 the UDA chairman, 'as if to underline the UDA's continuing class

[85] Boulton, D., The UVF 1966-73, An Anatomy Of Loyalist Rebellion, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973, p. 176.

independence', warned that 'people are beginning to 'catch on' about the Unionist government. The ordinary man is starting to think for himself about the fifty years of misrule that he did have'.[87]

There is little doubt that the class factor played a role in the ultimate utilisation of political fronts by the UDA. If its membership was going to be used and abused then it had to find its own political representation. But not only was there opposition from outside the UDA to its left of centre leanings but any radical, left wing sentiments were too much for many of those *within* the UDA. As McAuley noted above, the 'reaction to this developing 'class-conscious' line of argument was rapid, dramatic and bloody'.[88] Therefore, anything that sounded remotely like revolutionary left wing politics was stamped out. Boulton states that:

> '1972 ended with a new flare-up of ideological warfare within the UDA. Early in October an army patrol had stopped a car containing 'Duke' Ernie Elliot, 'Lieutenant-Colonel' of Woodvale. Searching the car, they found manuals on urban guerilla warfare and literature on Trotsky, Franz Fanon and Che Guevera. On 7 December, Elliot was found shot dead not far from his home, and the RUC made it known that they did not suspect the IRA. It was widely concluded, though without firm evidence, that Elliot, having identified himself with a left faction within the UDA, had been killed by a faction of the right.'[89]

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[86] McAuley, J., 'Cuchullain and an RPG-7: the ideology and politics of the Ulster Defence Association', in Hughes, E., Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1991, p. 52.
[87] Op. cit. Boulton p. 177.

Nevertheless, there was frustration that the UDA, 'which was largely responsible for the stoppage [of 1974], was unable to gain any political advantage from the street power that it had displayed. It watched as people like the Reverend Ian Paisley and William Craig pocketed the political gains.'[90] As disillusionment with unionist politicians hit a peak after the failed strike of 1977 the UDA set up two organisations that were to try and address the problem of working class representation. The New Ulster Political Research Group fulfilled the realisation that any support would only be forthcoming if there was a fresh approach to the problems of Northern Ireland and the Ulster Community Action Group was to represent grass roots loyalists by '[strengthening] its position at the community level'.[91] The NUPRG's 'Chairperson' stated that:

> 'The problem to date has been that the UDA has always relied on the established politicians to represent them politically. But we believe that over the last few years that representation hasn't been reflecting the true feelings of grass-root people'.[92]

John McMichael's poor showing in a South Belfast by-election (where he secured just 1.3% of the vote) illustrated that while the UDA may have been a mass organisation this was not reflected in the polls, and it was failures at the ballot box that undermined any subsequent ventures into politics.

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[88] Op. cit. McAuley p. 50.
[89] Op. cit. Boulton p. 182.
[90] Holland, J., 'Dark side's ascendance seals fate of the UDP', Irish Echo, December 12-18.
[91] Op. cit. McAuley p. 54.
[92] Ibid.

The roots of the establishment of the UDA's political fronts, therefore, 'lay in an intense feeling of frustration born of the realization that a section of the loyalist working class had no significant political role.'[93] This was equally true of Gary McMichael's Ulster Democratic Party. While the state was paramount in giving the loyalist political fronts greater utility through the ceasefires and the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement,[94] it was again the theme of loyalist representation that was the prime motivation in their use. Gary McMichael stated in the UDP's Conference in 1997:

> 'The UDP was created because the grassroots working class loyalist community had no voice and no honest representation. The major unionist parties were detached from the community and did little to project the interests of the loyalist people. They demanded its support and unquestioning loyalty but gave nothing in return. ... You see, we have a curious philosophy and that is that a political party is there to serve the people – not the other way around.'[95]

In summary, although the UDA had mass membership and was a working class body this did not guarantee electoral success if it chose to utilise a political front as an electoral tool. The division of labour ethos, traditional loyalties and the law abiding nature of unionism in general (see Chapter 9) meant that the perceived popular support generated by the UDA could never be transformed into political support and influence. The disorganised nature of the group and its primary preoccupation with organised crime and with maintaining individual fiefdoms also continually undermined the political front's

[93] Holland, J., 'Dark side's ascendance seals fate of the UDP', Irish Echo, December 12-18.
[94] McMichael managed to win a seat on the Lisburn district council in 1993 and the UDP polled 2.2% of the vote in the 1996 forum elections, but this success proved to be shortlived.

efforts (see chapters 5 and 6). Despite these fundamental obstacles, the 'popular support' variable has been an important factor behind the formation of the UDA's political fronts. However, rather than representing a burning *desire* to mobilise support for its political objectives, the converse was the case. The motivation behind these fronts was to give political representation to the loyalist working classes, who were, so it was perceived, in need of it and who had been 'let down' by unionist politicians. While this aspiration prompted the use of these fronts as electoral bodies it has been the lack of electoral support that has militated against their use.

## The UVF

The Progressive Unionist Party was also borne of the disillusionment with unionist politicians following the 1974 strike and therefore it also sought to give political representation to the loyalist working classes. The PUP was, if anything, more socialist in orientation than the UDA's political fronts. Such leanings were evident early on in the Troubles with a number of UVF men having been in the Northern Ireland Labour Party.[96] Gusty Spence, who had reputedly been the leader of the group and who was in prison for the 1966 murder of Peter Ward, went through an apparent conversion to socialism in prison through his friendship with a member of the Official IRA.[97] In 1972 he stated that 'our social conscience has to take as primacy the needs of the working class people'.[98]

[95] McMichael, G., Leader's Address, UDP Conference, February 22nd 1997, Linen Hall Library, Belfast.
[96] Patterson, H., interview.
[97] See op. cit. Boulton p. 167.
[98] Garland, R., Gusty Spence, Blackstaff, Belfast, 2001, p. 146. Spence later recalled that he had deliberately omitted to say *loyalist* working class people (p. 146).

But Spence argued that his type of socialism wasn't Marxist, Che Guevera or Trotskyite but more like 'Democratic socialism' modelled on the UK Labour Party.[99] It was 'motivated by the desire to build a 'caring society'.[100]

Although Spence had very tenuous links with the UVF leadership outside prison it was his 'education seminars' within that led the likes of David Ervine and Billy Hutchison to think more politically and become aware of 'class politics'[101] and so it was these early roots that were to provide the political thinking behind the PUP.

The formation of the PUP's first forerunner, the Ulster Loyalist Front, in 1973 also reflected a left of centre political approach. Its declared aim was to:

> 'express the views and opinions of grassroots Loyalists ... Its policies included a 'return to democracy' and increased use of referenda, workers' partnership schemes, and although in favour of private enterprise it wanted to curb 'international monopoly capitalism'. Better services for the old, the very young, the sick and disabled were called for, as well as changes in housing allocation and in educational structures.'[102]

As noted above the UVF was disillusioned with mainstream politicians who had 'misrepresented' the loyalist working class and this was the main motivation behind the utilisation of their political fronts (see chapter 9). It was perhaps inevitable that the

[99] Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, p. 31.
[100] Ibid.

emerging class consciousness of loyalists should lead to a socialist analysis that sought to provide this hitherto 'manipulated' constituency with a political voice. The Volunteer Party, for example, intended to:

> 'Concentrate its energies and resources in the pursuance of a constructive social and economic programme designed to bring about a better standard of living for the people of Northern Ireland ... to champion the cause of the ill-housed, the unemployed, the oppressed and the deprived.'[103]

The creation of the Independent Unionist group in April 1978 was once again the 'manifestation of the desire of many working-class loyalists to create their own effective political representation' and was again to focus on 'social and economic issues',[104] and these have been recurring themes of the renamed PUP.[105]

Thus, in this sense, like those of the UDA, the UVF's political fronts represented the desire to tap perceived existing support. Again like the UDA, however, these fronts have not been able to transform this perceived support into electoral success. While the Progressive Unionist Party does have two MLAs in the Northern Ireland Assembly, David Ervine and Billy Hutchison, it has never managed to generate a wide following for the reasons outlined in chapter 9.

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[101] See op. cit. Garland, Gusty Spence pp. 174-5.
[102] Op. cit. Garland, 'Seeking a Political Accommodation', p. 23.
[103] McKee, S., 'The Real Voice of Ulster Loyalism? The Progressive Unionist Party', M Litt Dissertation, University of Ulster, 1995, p. 7.
[104] Ibid. p. 9.
[105] McAuley, J., 'Many Roads Forward: Politics and Ideology Within the PUP', Etudes Irlandaises, Spring 2000, p. 178.

## Conclusion

Despite claims from the 1920s that the IRA was indifferent to popular support the group has in fact been concerned with mobilising a wider following. Part of the reason for this is related to its republican socialist legacy that has formed part of its ideological make up. After the failure of the militarists in the 1920s Peader O'Donnell's attempts to take the IRA down a more leftward path were manifested in Saor Eire and the Republican Congress. After the failed Border Campaign of 1956-62, Marxist dogma once more came to the fore with the subsequent attempt to end the policy of abstention. The traditional fault line between those of a left wing disposition and those that concentrated on the national object through purely military means, culminating in the 1969 split, however, was to be replaced by new sources of friction over Adams' political strategy.

This chapter has outlined the potential sources of support for the IRA should it have sought to mobilise it. First and foremost there has been a structural or fixed support for the IRA from those that have seen partition as an illegitimate settlement and who have condoned the 'armed struggle'. Beyond this has been a form of what might be termed latent sympathy from a broader group of Catholics for the tradition of revolt against the British that led to the birth of the Irish Free State (and then the Republic) in the first place. This sympathy was perpetuated by the real and perceived discriminatory practice of the Stormont regime since its inception in 1922. Thus, although the IRA was never likely to achieve a majority following (given that unionists and Protestants formed the majority of the population) there was a significant pool of potential support.

This thesis argues that the IRA has indeed been concerned with attracting a wider following and that this has been *the most significant variable* behind the greater utilisation of the group's political front. This was evident in the group's decision to adopt Sinn Fein as its political front in the first place after Russell's failed bombing campaign. The IRA also acknowledged that it was the lack of support that had led to the failure of the Border Campaign and that therefore a reevaluation of strategy was again necessary to address this.

Conversely, greater public support in the early 1970s, generated in large part by the loyalist reaction to the civil rights marches and the state's response to the evolving crisis, enabled the IRA to conduct a terrorist campaign endowed with resources and recruits. The group had long learnt that to run a successful insurgency campaign the support of the population that it claimed to represent was crucial. The belief that the minority population was in imminent danger and the view that the group was engaged in a short war meant that there was no time or inclination for an expanded role for Sinn Fein beyond its propaganda and 'policing' functions. When support began to fall away by the mid 1970s, however, and when it was clear that the British government was not going to withdraw from the province after the 1975 truce, Adams devised what was subsequently to be called the 'Long War' strategy. The main impetus behind this strategy was to mobilise popular support, both North and South, and this was to be part of Sinn Fein's expanded remit.

By 1981 the Long War strategy had failed to generate the support that Adams had hoped for. Sands' by-election victory, however, prompted the IRA to expand Sinn Fein's role further through engagement with the electoral process that this time was to tap perceived

existing support as well as mobilising further support. Adams reiterated the importance of expanding the struggle to the Irish Republic and this entailed dropping the long held policy of abstention from the Dail in 1986. The desire to generate support both North and South, therefore, was the main driving force behind the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein. Conversely, the internal frictions over the increasing engagement with the conventional political system meant that should there have been a drop in the level of popular support at the ballot box then the perceived utility of Sinn Fein in its electoral role would have been reduced.

With loyalist frustration at 'right wing' unionism and with the subsequent desire to give the loyalist working classes adequate representation it is no surprise that the loyalist political fronts were socialist in orientation. Indeed , the UDA's structure was actually interwoven with the Loyalist Association of Workers. It therefore appeared that the UDA and the loyalist political fronts in general would have a natural constituency of support. While they were created to provide a political voice to those they felt needed representation (especially after the successful Ulster Workers' Strike of 1974) the irony is that they have by and large failed to convert this perceived 'demand' into electoral success, largely because of the reasons outlined in chapter 9. While the 'popular support' variable was therefore important in bringing about the perceived utility of the loyalist political fronts the evident lack of support at the ballot box militated against their greater use.

# Chapter 8 - State Response

This chapter is concerned with how state response has facilitated or militated against the use of a terrorist group political front and how it has changed its role. In the case of the IRA from 1956-69 it is argued that the type of state response to the Border Campaign was fundamental in the failure of the IRA's strategy of violence and this led to a reappraisal of the group's approach that transformed Sinn Fein's role from being a tactical device, both as an electoral tool and a propaganda mouthpiece for the armed struggle, to representing moderation on the part of the movement. This was exemplified in Goulding's desire to abandon the long held republican tradition of abstention and his advocation of the gradual winding down of the armed struggle.

State response in the early 1970s from Stormont, Dublin and Westminster, however, all helped to polarize the brewing conflict. In the case of the IRA the perceived imminence of the crisis militated against the use of a political front, either as a tactical device or as a sign of moderation. Sinn Fein was in any case illegal until 1974. On the loyalist side, as this thesis argues that their political fronts represented a sign of moderation, polarization also meant that their utility was extremely limited (notwithstanding the other factors outlined in chapter 9 that militated against their use).

The legalisation of Sinn Fein represented the beginning of what is a central component of this thesis, specifically how the state has facilitated the use of a terrorist political front as a tactical device, even though the intention of Westminster was to strengthen the hand of

the so called 'doves' or 'politicians' in the movement and to get the IRA to politicize their grievances rather than continue with its military strategy. It could be argued that the strategy of using a political front in this way has been facilitated by the British, Irish and American governments right up to the present day, notwithstanding Tony Blair's Belfast speech of October 2002, which stated that a 'half in, half out' approach from republicans could no longer be tolerated. At the time of writing, however, it remains to be seen whether or not 'acts of completion' will become the new bargaining tools to take the place of decommissioning, and hence leave open the notion that Sinn Fein continues to be used as a tactical device, possibly, if unlikely, for an ultimate return to 'war', should a united Ireland not come about.

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In the case of Northern Ireland the state's response to terrorism has been a significant factor behind changes in the strategies of the IRA, the UDA and the UVF. Martha Crenshaw wrote:

> 'As in our analysis of the choices of the terrorist organisations, we are dealing here with the political decisions of government elites. These decisions are constrained, by the terrorist's initiatives and by the social, economic and political givens of the situation, which neither of the major actors – terrorist or government – controls. Yet governments have choices in how to combat terrorism – choices that can be key determinants of the outcome'.[1]

[1] Crenshaw, M. (ed.), Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power, Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 1983, p. 31.

This chapter will assess the effect that state response has had on terrorist group strategy vis a vis their use of political fronts, both directly and indirectly (such as the effect that it has had on the level of popular support for the groups that in turn may affect their strategies). The 'state' will include the Stormont administration (when it has existed), the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic, and therefore covers Anglo-Irish cooperation (or lack of). This is because, in the case of the IRA, membership has existed on both sides of the border.

Crenshaw warned of the potential for broadening the popular base of participation in violence by government over-reaction.[2] It is indeed an important test for any democratic state to get the balance right between dealing with terrorism in a robust and efficient way at the same time as not appearing to be oppressive. The Easter Rising serves as a reminder of the dangers of over-reaction. As an event it did not capture the public's imagination but the British state's response to it, executing its leaders, not only brought the insurgents sympathy from the populace at large but it also catapulted the event to the forefront of republican mythology, feeding the notion of the 'purity' of martyrs against an 'oppressive' state.

From its early days unionists did not, argued Rose, seek to make the state fully legitimate by attracting support from Catholics.[3] Unionists were a permanent majority in control of the state, nationalists were a permanent minority. The proportional representation electoral system that was included in the Government of Ireland Act was dropped in the province by 1929, through fear of the 33% Catholic minority. According to O'Connor

[2] Ibid. p. 34.
[3] Rose, R., Governing Without Consensus, An Irish Perspective, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, p. 93.

'this was a suppressed community for half a century: ignored by Britain, abandoned in all but rhetoric by their supposed kith and kin in the Republic, accustomed to the idea that they could achieve nothing politically for themselves.'[4]

In his discussion on state legitimacy Rose noted the failure of the boundaries of the state to match the political system.[5] There were specifically two political systems within the UK – one in Northern Ireland and one on the mainland. If this, along with the hardcore of the minority Catholics that were still bitter over the partition settlement, undermined the 'Britishness' of the province then the Irish state's constitutional claim to the North was bound to destabilise it further. The result was two different states laying claim to the same territory (one of which controlled that territory) and this provided would-be terrorists with the constitutional 'justification' to their claims as legitimate freedom fighters. When assessing the impact of state response in Northern Ireland, therefore, it is important to understand the inherent constitutional instability that derived from the 'state', and particularly the non-occupying Irish state that laid claim to the province in 1937, and how this gave a prima facie justification for nationalists of either hue (Irish and British) to resort to violence.

Nevertheless, Wichert argues that the welfare state that was introduced in Northern Ireland after 1945 pushed Northern Ireland's fortunes ahead of the South, loosening ties of allegiance by which the minority felt bound to Dublin.[6] Coogan concurs stating that 'the welfare state having been introduced to the North many former Nationalists were

[4] O'Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 377.
[5] Op. cit. Rose p. 27.
[6] See chapters 3 and 4 in Wichert, S., Northern Ireland Since 1945, Longman, London and New York, 1991.

secretly disposed to support the British link [sic].'[7] This did not alleviate what Wichert called a 'cold war' between the two communities in the 1950s, but the population at large, including the minority, was 'kept content'.[8] While unionism was enjoying a period of 'unprecedented strength', Catholics felt better off than their counterparts in the Republic, socially and economically.[9] There was little desire at this time for political terrorism – which in turn implied de facto acceptance of the status quo and partition.

Yet this did not prevent Sinn Fein from achieving a sizeable vote in the Northern elections of May 1955, polling 152,310 votes (23.5%), 'almost the entire nationalist vote', and winning two seats.[10] This was at least to some degree because the Nationalist party of Northern Ireland did not participate apparently for fear of being embarrassed by their nationalist rivals.[11] Another factor, according to Smith, was the 'large measure of popular steam behind the nationalist cause, which had arisen as a result of the Free State's declaration of a republic in 1948'.[12]

Sinn Fein's electoral role was part of a dual-track strategy that was similar to that of the 1980s. The difference was that, although the IRA carried out the occasional arms raid,[13] the Border Campaign had not yet got under way. Nevertheless, the group was in the final stages of preparation for a military assault and the party was very much under the control of the Army Council. The IRA saw the electoral success of its political front as a direct mandate for the use of force against the British state. It must have been further

[7] Coogan, T., The IRA, Fontana, London, 1987, p. 335.
[8] Op. cit. Wichert p. 71.
[9] Ibid. p. 75.
[10] Smith, M., Fighting For Ireland? The Military Strategy Of The Irish Republican Movement, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 67.
[11] See Bowyer Bell, J., The Secret Army, The IRA, 1916-1979, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, p. 269.
[12] Op. cit. Smith p. 67.

encouraged by the fact that the Irish government 'took no steps to stop [the illegal drilling]' that took place in the newly established training camps in the Republic[14] as it prepared for its next campaign.

Thus, prior to the Border Campaign and the subsequent banning of Sinn Fein in 1964 Sinn Fein's role clearly went beyond simply being the propaganda mouthpiece for the IRA. It was also used as an effective electoral tool to illustrate the strength of feeling behind the nationalist cause (see chapter 7) in a dual-track strategy, although the party's support was to evaporate during the failed Border Campaign.

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## The IRA 1956-62

State response was a crucial factor behind the failure of the Border Campaign and thus in the loss of popular support for the IRA and Sinn Fein. It led directly to the perception within the IRA that the use of violence as a strategy (with Sinn Fein serving as the electoral tool and propaganda mouthpiece for that violence) had failed and this led to a reevaluation of the republican approach in the 1960s. This in turn meant a very different role for Sinn Fein – instead of being the electoral tool and propaganda mouthpiece for armed republicanism it was to become part of Goulding's project of identifying with the working classes with an emphasis on mass mobilisation. Thus combined state response

[13] See op. cit. Coogan p. 335.

from the Irish Republic and the UK forced a reappraisal of IRA strategy that in turn led to a very different role for Sinn Fein.

Because of the internal split in the IRA the two governments were surprised by the launch of the Border Campaign or Operation Harvest. Their response to it was to a large extent determined by the realities of indigenous circumstances. Costello's 'fragile' coalition, 'supported by the remaining three members of Clann na Poblachta, had to tread warily, fearful that the campaign might set off a patriotic orgy in the Republic'[15], whilst conversely the value of the unionists to the British government meant that there was pressure for a harsh reaction against the insurgents. On the 15th December the Special Powers Act in the North enabled the Royal Ulster Constabulary to arrest and intern without trial. They were also able to respond through the 'Reserve Force' that had been established in 1950 and which had been 'progressively strengthened and equipped since then'.[16] Henceforth 'hundreds' of republicans were arrested, including thirty on December the 21st and 22nd.[17] In the same month Stormont banned Sinn Fein, while the Dublin government reassured the British by doubling the number of border guards.[18]

Following the mass funerals of South and O'Hanlon, however, the Dublin government also arrested a number of republican figures - 'relative tolerance of the campaign during December had brought three deaths and dragged the country to the edge of a confrontation with Great Britain.'[19] By the end of January 'almost the entire Army

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[14] Ibid. p. 366.
[15] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 293.
[16] Ryder, C., The RUC, A Force Under Fire, Mandarin, London, 1982, p. 91.
[17] Bishop, P. and Mallie, E., The Provisional IRA, Corgi, London, 1992, p. 44.
[18] Op. cit. Coogan, p. 388.
[19] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 300.

Council and GHQ staff' ended up in prison, forcing the IRA to form a temporary Army Council.[20] A combination of legislation and security force determination undertaken simultaneously by **both** the Southern and Northern administrations had routed the organisation. Internment on both sides of the border had meant that most 'volunteers' were behind bars during the campaign.

The 1957 election in the South brought De Valera back to power once more. Historically, argues Peter Taylor, 'republicans have tended to deal more harshly with their own than the British ever did.'[21] In July 1957, after the death of an RUC constable at an IRA ambush, he ordered wholesale internment as he had done in the war. This included the arrest of 'most of the Sinn Fein executive, Army Council and GHQ staff'.[22] Thus, 'at one go, for the second time in six months, the top had been clipped off the IRA and many of the activists swept from the scene.'[23] Meanwhile the British army was well armed enough to ensure that 'increasingly, the IRA had to confine itself to sabotage operations, often on a low level.'[24]

Because of continuing pressure from the security forces, both North and South, the insurgents were also confronted with a 'lack of sanctuary, ... [and] lack of space for manouevre.'[25] In the Republic in the early autumn a number of key IRA figures were arrested so that 'control from the top had been lost and with it direction of the 1958-59 season'.[26] In November 1961 the Irish Republic took steps to crush the campaign once

[20] Ibid. p. 301.
[21] Taylor, P., Provos, The IRA And Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997, p. 21.
[22] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 43.
[23] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell p. 306.
[24] Ibid. p. 312.
[25] Ibid. p. 330.
[26] Ibid. p. 323.

and for all by reintroducing the Military tribunals that had been used in the 1940s.[27] The optimistic hope that the insurgents might attract some sympathy from the Southern government was a serious miscalculation and there were no contingency plans to deal with its unexpected response.

The IRA clearly believed that the Border Campaign had been a failure. The republican perception was therefore that the strategy of violence had failed[28] and this prompted the group to reevaluate its approach. There was henceforth to be an emphasis on left wing ideology and greater identification with the plight of the workers. In the South this entailed ''anti-imperialist' housing, fishing rights and land ownership campaigns', issues that could be pursued openly 'through their political wing, Sinn Fein'.[29] Thus, like Saor Eire in the 1930s, Sinn Fein was being used to generate a wider following by identifying itself with social and worker related issues. The difference, however, was that Goulding's IRA sought to mobilise support for social revolution as the priority over national unification, whereas in the 1930s the 'organisation men' of the IRA used left wing ideology to mobilise support for the national cause.

State response in the North prevented the use of a political front as an electoral tool because the party was outlawed under the Special Powers Act:

[27] See ibid. p.333.
[28] Notwithstanding those who believed that any rebellious act, whether it succeeded or not, was beneficial to the cause as a nationalist statement that continued the legacy of past 'martyrs'.
[29] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p.73.

'The Government had banned Sinn Fein in 1964 along with its newspaper, the United Irishman. The movement had briefly circumvented the ban by setting up Republican Clubs instead, but they were outlawed in 1967.'[30]

This meant that it was no longer possible for the IRA to pursue its dual-track strategy of violence and the ballot box that was to be reinvigorated in the 1980s.

State response along with the drop in popular support were key factors in the failure of the use of violence as a strategy and this prompted a reevaluation of the IRA's approach in the 1960s, which in turn transformed the role of the political front from being the propaganda mouthpiece and electoral tool for a terrorist organisation to being the device through which popular support could be mobilised for the socialist cause. It should be noted, however, that, as the 1960s passed, the rift within the IRA became more pronounced and one of its manifestations was two very different roles for Sinn Fein (or what became the Republican Clubs in the North). Although Sinn Fein was banned until 1974 the emergence of Provisional Sinn Fein saw the political front's role revert to its traditional one (since the late 1940s) – that of the propaganda mouthpiece for armed republicanism.

## The IRA 1969 - 2002

There is no doubt that the state responses, from Dublin, Stormont and Westminster, have all had a significant impact on IRA strategy vis a vis its use of a political front. All their

[30] Ibid. p.74.

responses in the early 1970s combined to contribute to the republican perception that politics was a waste of time and therefore militated against the greater utility of the political front (beyond its use as a propaganda mouthpiece), either as a tactic or a sign of moderation. Government policy and security force successes by the mid 1970s, however, forced a rethink within the emerging leadership in the Northern IRA that did entail a larger role for Sinn Fein (but outside existing state structures). Crucially Sinn Fein had been legalised in 1974 with the objective of encouraging the 'politicians' or 'moderates' within the republican movement.

The policy of Ulsterization, criminalisation, and normalisation helped to limit the appeal of the IRA and Sinn Fein in the late 1970s. But Thatcher's refusal to give in to the hunger strikers ironically instigated a series of events that were to catapult Sinn Fein into electoral politics, not as a sign of moderation but as part of a dual-track strategy that re-emphasised the use of violence. The state's response to Sinn Fein's success at the ballot box, through the Anglo-Irish agreement, failed to have a lasting impact on the party's electoral fortunes and so, despite internal IRA frictions, did not force the group to reconsider the use of the political project. The alternative to marginalising the republican movement was to bring it into an all-inclusive peace process that ensured that the political front was to have even greater utility. It has, for example, enabled the mainstream republican movement to negotiate the release of its prisoners, to gain two executive positions in the new executive, to claim approximately £100,000 office expenses for each of its MPs, to achieve British demilitarisation in the province, and to negotiate for the release of the so-called on the runs - and all while the IRA remains armed and its activity allegedly continues. At the time of writing it is not clear whether

the current peace process has been and continues to be the means by which the IRA reaps tactical advantage, or whether the party does now genuinely represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence. The process which, through the sponsorship of the UK, the Irish Republic and the United States, has brought republicans into the conventional political system has seen Sinn Fein apparently represent this new relative moderation on the part of the republican movement. Alternatively, if Sinn Fein has been used as a tactical device to gain concessions then we have witnessed the tactical use of a political front to an unprecedented level, enough to provide a lesson for any group wanting to abuse a peace process while harbouring intentions of a return to war when conditions suited. It is a state gamble – the state has either provided the structures and assurances through which Sinn Fein can operate as evidence of moderation on the part of the republican movement or it has facilitated the devious use of a political front as a tactical device.

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In order to assess the impact of the 'state response' factor in the second case study it is first necessary to recall March 1963 when Captain Terence O'Neill succeeded Lord Brookeborough as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. The new premier was determined to ease sectarian animosity in the Province but his policy that was intended to lead to 'the full legitimation [of Stormont] in the end threatened its repudiation.'[31] His good intentions raised Catholic expectations but also managed to generate Protestant fears. Hardline unionists saw O'Neill's meetings with the Republic's Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, in 1965 as a sell out and, in the face of unionist opposition to reforms, nationalists were

repeatedly disappointed and came to see his efforts as 'window dressing to fool Westminster critics of the unsavoury Unionist machine.'[32]

Henry Patterson concludes his article on British government policy from 1969-74 with:

> 'Instead of making it clear that what was at stake was a process of reconstitution of the Northern Ireland state along more democratic and equitable lines, the desire to return as quickly as possible to a situation where British involvement was minimised, led to an attempt to create a nonsectarian coalition. This meant, at the very least, appearing to take nationalist aspirations seriously. The result was predictably disastrous. For while it might have been possible to at least secure Protestant acquiescence to a more substantial programmes (sic) of *internal* (writer's italics) reform, reforms, which appeared to be linked to a process of gradual British disengagement were quite a different matter.'[33]

This desire to continue its tradition of detachment from the province[34] on the part of Westminster created a situation that would encourage nationalists at the same time as reinforcing the insecurity of unionists. From the loyalist point of view it was an attitude that provided the backdrop to the notion of an Independent Ulster. As far as republicans were concerned it confirmed their belief that it would not take much to force the British into complete withdrawal. The British state's detachment from Northern Ireland,

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[31] Op. cit. Rose, p. 100.
[32] Op. cit. Bowyer Bell, p. 347.
[33] Patterson, H., 'British Governments and the 'Protestant Backlash' 1969-74', p. 247.
[34] This was confirmed by Edward Heath's apparent desperation to avoid the imposition of direct rule because 'it would lead to Westminster becoming irrevocably involved in a conflict that one set of minutes said 'could be the United Kingdom's Vietnam' (From cabinet papers in Cobain, I., 'Heath in firing line over his role in Bloody Sunday', The Times, December 2nd 2002.)

therefore, simply exacerbated the problems caused by the dual constitutional claim on the province.

This destabilising mix of insecurity on the unionist side and aspiration on the Catholic side meant that the situation that was brewing up in Northern Ireland at the end of the 1960s was to present a far more formidable problem for the British government than any other in the province since partition. Westminster had hitherto taken an arms length approach to the internal affairs of the province but the civil rights marches and the loyalist response threatened to spiral out of control. The apparent indifference of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to the attacks by loyalists on People's Democracy marchers at Burntollet Bridge in January 1969 marked the beginning of the loss of confidence in the security forces of Northern Ireland within the Catholic community. The following night the police entered the Bogside area of Londonderry and behaved in such a way as to prompt the establishment of a Commission of enquiry (the Cameron Commission) which concluded that:

> 'We have to record with regret that our investigations have led us to the unhesitating conclusion that on the night of 4th/5th January a number of policemen were guilty of misconduct which involved assault and battery, malicious damage to property in streets in the predominantly Catholic Bogside area giving reasonable cause for apprehension of personal injury among other innocent inhabitants, and the use of provocative sectarian and political slogans. While we fully realize that the police had been working without adequate relief or rest for long hours, and were under great stress, we are afraid that not only do we find these allegations of misconduct are substantiated, but that for such conduct

among members of a disciplined and well - led force there can be no acceptable justification or excuse.'[35]

The imminence of the perceived loyalist threat and an apparently disinterested security force prompted some Catholics to seek defence from the IRA, and this was an important origin of Sinn Fein's 'community policing' role. Moreover, it was the perceived lack of legitimacy of the state and its police force that made this function for the front ideologically desirable for the group. The army too, originally sent in to defend Catholics, soon became the enemy to many of them. After its so-called 'rape of the falls', where homes were ransacked in the search for weapons and which affected 20,000 Catholics[36], its role was seen as an oppressive instrument of unionist rule. Internment without trial and the disaster of Bloody Sunday further alienated the minority population from the state. In all, the response of the Stormont regime and the security forces had made a significant contribution to the surge in popular support for the IRA and therefore helped to sustain its strategy of violence alone with the (still illegal) Sinn Fein's role restricted to being the mouthpiece for such a strategy.

The Irish state's response made its own contribution to the escalating crisis. Up until the 1970s the British government's reaction to the IRA was restricted by the fact that the organisation was based in Dublin and so its success in dealing with the group has largely depended on cooperation with the Republic. Swift action from the two governments (under the Prevention of Violence Bill in Britain) had ensured that Russell's exploits had

[35] The Cameron Report: 'Disturbances in Northern Ireland, Report of the Commission appointed by the Governor of Northern Ireland', Cmnd. 532, published in Belfast by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, September 1969, Cain website: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ .

[36] Jeffrey K., 'Security Policy In Northern Ireland: Some Reflections On The Management Of Violent Conflict', Terrorism and Political Violence, Volume 2, Spring 1990, No. 1, p. 27.

come to 'a dead end by the autumn of 1939'[37], while internment on both sides of the border was key to defeating the campaign of 1956-62.

Notwithstanding these achievements in countering the IRA, the Irish Republic's response has often been viewed by the United Kingdom as somewhat ambivalent, mainly because of Fianna Fail's historic attachment with the cause of Irish republicanism. Certainly its response to the emerging crisis in the late 1960s did not help as far as Westminster was concerned. The Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, controversially and publicly stated that 'it is clear that the Irish Government can no longer stand idly by and see innocent people injured and perhaps worse.'[38] Field hospitals were set up along the border in County Donegal to treat some of the injured. O'Brien claims that 'the undercurrent of sympathy' from the Southern administration encouraged the IRA to proceed with its plans, 'emerging ever more clearly as the army of the Catholic people', operating from a safe base in Catholic territory (the Republic).[39] A wife of an IRA prisoner recalls:

> 'People's expectations were really raised at that time. They felt our saviours were coming: to the rescue! ... People felt brilliant, great, this is the rest of our nation looking after us at last, after all this suffering.'[40]

The issue of Southern support came to a head when two senior cabinet ministers were dismissed on suspicion of illegally importing arms for use in Northern Ireland. A combination of the existence of key ministers in the South that had republican credentials

[37] Kelley, K., The Longest War, Northern Ireland and the IRA, Zed Press, London, 1982, p. 67.
[38] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 50.
[39] O'Brien, C., States Of Ireland, Anchor Press, London, 1972, p. 280.
[40] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 252.

and the widespread turmoil in the North that threatened the Catholic population led to a very different attitude towards the IRA compared to its response in 1939 or 1956-62.

Peter Taylor wrote that:

> 'The assistance that the Dublin Government was to lend to its beleaguered fellow nationalists in the North was strictly covert. Government money was channelled through various bank accounts and ended up largely, but not exclusively, in the hands of the IRA in Belfast. Most of the recipients were members of the newly emergent Provisional IRA. This was no accident as the Dublin Government was thought to favour the more traditional 'nationalist' IRA, the Provisionals, over the Officials, whom ministers regarded as dangerous Marxists who would be as eager to overthrow the Southern state as they were in Northern Ireland.'

According to Kelly, 'the Southern pay-off was also made conditional upon the Northerners' agreement not to engage in any political activities in Eire'.[41] This on its own would have militated against the use of a political front in the South. Taylor's interview with Blaney revealed a plan that could only have strengthened and revitalised the IRA, both materially and in terms of morale:

> 'I asked Neil Blaney whether he accepted that by his actions he had helped create the Provisional IRA. He sucked on his pipe, then went through the ritual of stoking it and prodding it with a match before he answered. 'We didn't help to create them [because that was the result of the IRA's own internal dynamics], but

we certainly would have accelerated, by what assistance we could have given, their emergence as a force.'

Charles Haughey, Neil Blaney and Kevin Boland were all charged with the illegal importation of arms. They were found not guilty, though apparently 'not because they were innocent of importing arms but because the Minister of Defence had authorised the operation; hence the importation was not 'illegal'.'[42]

To give some indication as to how *perceptions* are what counts in Northern Ireland and how these contributed to the polarization of attitudes in the early 1970s, responding to Taylor's question as to whether he was surprised by the whole affair, John Taylor (now Lord Kilcooney) said:

> 'Well, it wasn't a major surprise. The average unionist in Northern Ireland would have expected nothing less, you know. They don't trust Dublin Cabinet ministers and they kind of assume that people who are in the Cabinet in Dublin would be involved in some way with republican terrorism. So when this actually came out to be a reality, people weren't as shocked as you would imagine.'[43]

The confirmation of unionist and loyalist suspicions helped to polarize the crisis in the North which in turn meant that the use of the IRA's political front was going to be restricted to 'community policing' and being the group's propaganda tool. The more substantive point to be made here, however, is that because the IRA received money that

[41] Op. cit. Kelley p. 125
[42] Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 76.

was allegedly signed off by Irish ministers, and as Lynch's words implied that the Republic would become physically involved if the situation north of the border deteriorated, the IRA felt vindicated in pursuing its strategy of violence alone. Thus, a sense of impending crisis and the perception of imminent action from the South certainly contributed to the IRA's approach, one that saw no need for greater utilisation of its political front (which was in any case banned until 1974) beyond its traditional role as a mouthpiece for violence.

As early as June 1970, however, according to O'Brien, the North was not such a topic in the Republic's government anymore.[44] Certainly it soon became apparent that Dublin was not going to live up to its earlier posturing much to the disappointment of republicans in the province:

> 'They seemed to totally just want to ignore it. They just didn't want anything to do with it. I don't know how they would see it, but that's how we feel – a total let-down.'[45]

Once it was clear that tangible support from the South was not going to be forthcoming it was inevitable that this would in the long run make its own contribution to undermining the IRA's military capacity - materially, in terms of morale and in terms of moral justification and support for the struggle. Despite the money that was apparently procured through these men for the IRA, the expectation of intervention and further, more substantial assistance from the Lynch government was not met. In fact by 1972 the Irish

[43] Ibid.
[44] Op. cit. O'Brien p. 218.

administration introduced the Offences against the State Act, 'a draconian new bill which allowed the authorities to jail anyone as a member of an illegal organization simply on the word of a policeman'[46], after which the Irish Gardai launched a series of raids on IRA suspects.[47] The receding interest in the problems of the North took much of the morale out of the republican movement in the early 1970s.

The state response that was to provide the main impetus behind the IRA's strategy in the early 1970s, however, was that from the unionist administration and the security forces at its disposal. Internment gave the IRA the excuse to indulge in what they saw as an all out war reducing any chance that the political front could have played a more prominent role. An editorial in the Republican News concurred that 'the Republican Movement must be assured of the willing co-operation of all our people. Political strife is meaningless now. The nation must take precedence over the party. The die is already cast. 'This is war''.[48] The selective nature of internment[49] and the Bloody Sunday tragedy served only to increase support and recruits to the IRA as well as reinforce the group's strategy of violence. The British government realised that a fresh state response was required and duly suspended Stormont in April 1972 and imposed Direct Rule.

An MI6 official who had been sent to the province, Frank Steele, summed up the ineffectiveness and counterproductive nature of the state's response prior to the imposition of Direct Rule:

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[45] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 252.
[46] Holland J., Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1999, p. 95.
[47] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 243.
[48] Republican News quoted in op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 190.

'There was very little co-ordination of whatever intelligence was being produced by the RUC, the army and MI5. Internment had been a disaster. It barely damaged the IRA's command structure and led to a flood of recruits, money and weapons. It was a farce. And as for the special interrogation techniques, they were damned stupid as well as morally wrong. Such methods are counter-productive and do you enormous damage when they get out, as they inevitably do. And in practical terms, the additional usable intelligence they produced was, I understand, minimal.'[50]

Peter Taylor concluded that by the beginning of 1972:

'the powerful base established by the IRA in the nationalist community was the result not of intimidation but of a series of mistakes and miscalculations made by the unionist government and the British over the previous two years, of which 'Bloody Sunday' was the latest and most catastrophic.'[51]

Direct Rule was seen by republicans as a defeat for unionism that had been forced on the British by the IRA. Now it was just a matter of time before the 'imperialists' would be driven out of the North. Victory was around the corner as Tommy Gorman, an IRA member, explained:

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[49] See op. cit. O'Brien p. 274.
[50] Steele, F., quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 130.
[51] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 130.

> 'Everyone felt we were very close to victory ... Most people on the ground felt that it was only a matter of time before the British were going to finally admit defeat.'[52]

It was for this reason that any change in strategy was unlikely, unless the British withdrew from the province, and so any expanded role for the political front at this time would have served no purpose. An IRA commander, Martin Meehan, claimed that:

> 'Politics was a dirty word in those days. We actually believed we could drive the British army into the sea. It was raw determination, a gut feeling that if we could keep up the pressure we could do it. As young men, that was the thing that motivated us. We really thought that victory was just around the corner and that with one more push we could do it. All the signs were there that we were on the road and we had moved mountains.'[53]

As a result the republican group's meeting with Willie Whitelaw in 1972 was not conducted via a political front but took place with the IRA itself. The fact that the meeting took place at all was an indication of how successful IRA strategy had been. But something did happen at the meeting which would indirectly have ramifications for republican strategy vis a vis the use of a political front. As a condition for the truce talks Whitelaw, home secretary at the time, granted special category status to IRA prisoners – an issue that was to resurface in dramatic fashion by the end of the decade. The second significant point in relation to the meeting was that:

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[52] Ibid. p. 135.
[53] Ibid.

> 'Steele [believed] that the experiences and discussions of that day and the meeting at Cheyne Walk increased Adams' recognition of the limitations of 'armed struggle' and the need for the IRA to have a parallel political policy if it was ever to get anywhere.'[54]

In 1974 the British government de-proscribed Sinn Fein in order to provide the means by which the authorities were able to maintain contact with the republican movement at the same time as '[avoiding] the impression that direct negotiations were taking place with the IRA'.[55] The main reason for legalising the political front, however, lay 'in the hope that this might promote the IRA's political activity at the expense of its military effort'.[56] This, according to one PSNI Special Branch source, was a pivotal moment and a serious miscalculation.[57] What the British government didn't realise was that Sinn Fein would not become an alternative to the armed struggle but that it would be a sub-unit of the organisation. State response in this regard, and it has arguably persisted in facilitating the use of the political front in this way to this day, has been crucial in enabling the republican movement to use Sinn Fein as a tactical device and an extra weapon in the IRA's 'war' against the British. This was soon to become apparent through the so-called Long War strategy.

[54] Ibid. p. 144
[55] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 272
[56] Ibid.
[57] Special Branch source, interview.

By 1974 it looked as though the tide seemed to be turning against the insurgents. The introduction of Diplock courts[58] in 1972 and security force successes in 1973-4 (between April 1973 and April 1974 1,292 people were charged with terrorist offences)[59] had put the IRA on the back foot.[60]

The 'disastrous' truce had made matters worse.[61] Through secret negotiations the British government had hinted that it might consider 'withdrawal' if the IRA ended its campaign. The government, however, had no intention of letting go of Northern Ireland but the effect of the truce was debilitating – to those in prison like Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness it looked as though 'the IRA [was] being run down'. [62] In early 1976 there were even thoughts of calling off the campaign through '[shortage] of money, [shortage] of arms and [through] men getting arrested.'[63] The IRA had been taken in by the British who had 'pretended they might withdraw'.[64]

The problem for Gerry Adams was that if the military struggle came to a halt then so did the whole struggle and the truce, which they had entered into, 'isolated from the rest of the body politic in Ireland'[65], had nearly defeated republicanism. The state's ceasefire tactic, with the belief that the longer the truce lasted the less likely the IRA would want to, or be able to, return to 'war', had shown the republican leadership that the battle

[58] Juryless courts resided over by judges (to avoid the problem of juror intimidation). See The 'Diplock' Report: 'Report of the Commission to Consider Legal Procedures to deal with Terrorist Activities in Northern Ireland', Cmnd. 5185, published in London by, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1972, SBN 10 151850 1, Cain website: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ .
[59] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 242
[60] For arrests see also op. cit. Taylor, Provos pp. 152-3.
[61] Morrison D., quoted in op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 275.
[62] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 197
[63] McKee, B. (IRA member) quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 199.
[64] McKittrick , D., interview.
[65] Op. cit. Taylor, Provos p. 199.

henceforth had to be fought on other fronts as well, and this promised a greater role for Sinn Fein, though not as a sign of moderation, but as the means to expand the struggle beyond the purely militaristic approach.

The success of the security forces had forced young IRA leaders to rethink their strategy from prison. No longer was victory just around the corner. The realisation that the British government had no intention of leaving the province and the state's increasingly successful use of informers were key factors behind the movement's 'Long War' strategy. Another legacy of the 1975 truce was the establishment of Sinn Fein 'incident centres' that were to monitor the IRA ceasefire – it was a significant step for the future of the political front. As Taylor noted above 'they were a watershed in the public perception of Sinn Fein, giving it a political standing in the nationalist community and, more importantly, a physical presence.'[66]

There is little doubt that the security force successes from 1972 onwards against the republican movement, coupled with the debilitating truce, were key factors behind Gerry Adams' Long War strategy that entailed an enhanced role for Sinn Fein. The response had restricted the group militarily while the government's reaction convinced the insurgents that they were not about to leave the province in a hurry. State response had therefore not only convinced the emerging Northern leadership that the 'war' had to be fought on other fronts as well as the military but that it was going to be a far longer struggle than republicans had anticipated. Sinn Fein's role was henceforth not going to be restricted to being the propaganda mouthpiece for a strategy of violence.

[66] Ibid. p. 186.

In the meantime the state's pressure was kept up. Secretary of States Merlyn Rees and then Roy Mason introduced the policy of Ulsterization, criminalisation and normalisation – a process involving the restoration of police primacy (taking the army out of the front line) and the removal of special category status.[67] As Mark Urban argues, soldiers do battle, police do police work. Having the army on the streets was potentially going to lead to greater alienation of the minority community - 'over-reaction to taunts can produce incidents which play into the hands of the IRA, feeding the nationalists' stereotype of the British Army as a brutal occupying force.'[68] The new policy was designed to eliminate this possibility.

The security force response in the late 1970s did, however, have its problems. Apart from the emergence of Northern Command under Martin McGuinness as the new centre of power in the republican movement, intense rivalry between the different security agencies hampered an effective response. Nevertheless, through the new policy, and under Kenneth Newman, the intelligence performance had 'greatly improved' by early 1977.[69] The reorganisation of police work that enhanced the force's interrogation ability and new legislation that allowed terrorist suspects to be held for up to seven days produced results.[70] Indeed, 'between 1976 and 1979 about 3,000 people were charged with terrorist offences, most of them on the basis of confessions obtained under

[67] Special category status had been conceded by William Whitelaw in 1972 after a hunger strike by inmate Billy McKee and included privileges such as prisoners wearing their own clothing and not having to do prison work.
[68] Urban, M., Big Boys' Rules, The Secret Struggle Against The IRA, Faber and Faber, London, 1992, p. 69.
[69] See ibid. p. 29
[70] Ibid.

interrogation'.[71] As Wichert notes the 1970s was a period in which the government succeeded in curbing the violence of the terrorists without actually eradicating it.[72]

It was the removal of special category status, however, that was to set off a chain of events over the next five years that was to have the most significant impact on IRA strategy, and particularly with regard to the role of its political front. It was Margaret Thatcher's refusal (after coming to power in 1979) to concede to the demands of republican prisoners over political status that ultimately led to the movement's more political strategy and indeed in the end its engagement with the Good Friday Agreement. It all began with the 'Dirty Protest' which then evolved into a full blown hunger strike that lead to the deaths of ten prisoners.

Edward Moxon-Browne wrote in 1981 that 'from the point of view of the state, the existence of PSF is important since it allows for some sort of communication with PIRA without too much political embarrassment.'[73] What wasn't to the government's liking, however, was the level of electoral support Sinn Fein managed to mobilise after Bobby Sands' success in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Republicans could argue with some justification that they weren't just a band of extremists with little support but that they did have a significant electoral mandate.

British government policy in the 1980s, underpinned by a commitment to keeping Northern Ireland within the union, sought to counter both the 'bullet' and 'ballot box'

[71] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 321.
[72] Op. cit. Wichert p. 171.
[73] Moxon-Browne, E., 'The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland', Wilkinson, P. (ed.), British Perspectives On Terrorism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1981, p. 51.

parts of republican strategy. The success of Sinn Fein after the hunger strikes was of serious concern to the Conservative administration, who feared that the party might actually overtake the vote of the constitutional nationalist party, the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP).[74] The former won 13.4% of the vote in the 1983 Westminster election compared to the SDLP's 17.9% and Gerry Adams was elected MP for West Belfast.[75] Something had to be given to constitutional nationalists to boost their support against the electoral advances of the republican movement. This came in the form of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) of 1985.

It should be noted that the Agreement was preceded by a period of rapprochement between the Irish and British governments and this was vitally important in improving cooperation against the threat of the IRA. The first Anglo-Irish summit in November 1983 for two years (after a rift over the Falklands war) reflected Dublin's concern over the electoral advances of Sinn Fein, and its fear that further increases in support for the IRA might lead to an attempt by the group to drag the South into the conflict.[76]

The agreement originated from the New Ireland Forum, which included Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and the Irish Labour Party from the Republic and the SDLP. In May 1984 they came up with three options: 'a united thirty two county state, a federal arrangement, or joint authority within Northern Ireland by Dublin and London.'[77] Margaret Thatcher immediately dismissed all three. Intergovernmental discussions continued in the

[74] Sinn Fein won 13.4% of the vote in the 1983 Westminster election compared to the SDLP's 17.9%.
[75] Bew P. and Gillespie G., Northern Ireland, A Chronology Of The Troubles 1968-1999, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin 1999, p. 172.
[76] Fitzgerald, G., All in A Life, Garrett Fitzgerald, An Autobiography, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p. 410.
[77] Op. cit. Wichert p. 193.

aftermath of the Forum report and the British government, under pressure from America[78], and clearly interested in cross-border security cooperation, managed to negotiate the AIA. It was a watershed for Catholics in the province – it recognised that there were two traditions in Northern Ireland and pledged to further 'Cross-Border Cooperation on Security, Economic, Social and Cultural Matters'.[79] Apart from security cooperation, the object as far as Britain was concerned was to encourage those engaged in constitutional politics and to isolate extremists.

The AIA appeared to have the desired affect. In the 1987 election the SDLP stretched its lead over Sinn Fein to nearly 10%[80] and Gerry Adams lost his seat. The state's response through the AIA had put pressure on Adams' political strategy from the militarists within the movement, especially when they were sitting on a stockpile of Libyan weapons. But there was no denying that Sinn Fein still had a level of core support which, although less than the post-Sands results, was nevertheless substantial enough to be of serious concern to constitutional politicians. The banning of Sinn Fein from television broadcasts in October 1988 was the last throw of a mindset that sought to marginalise militant republicanism rather than bringing it in from the cold and acknowledging that the party did have an electoral mandate.

One of the first indications that the British government's approach was about to shift were the comments of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Peter Brooke who, in November 1989, stated that the IRA could not be beaten and that the government could

[78] See Wilson, A., Irish America and the Ulster Conflict, 1968-1995, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 287.
[79] As quoted in Wichert op. cit. p. 194.
[80] See Bew and Gillespie op. cit. p. 208.

talk to the IRA after a ceasefire.[81] The state's new approach was about to impact directly on the role of the IRA's political front and give it a prominence that had hitherto not been realised. In November 1990 Brooke famously declared that the British had no 'strategic or economic interest' in keeping the North within the UK.[82] The government's position was clearly changing from commitment to the union to a position of neutrality – a shift that prompted Adams, after persuasion from the SDLP leader John Hume, to adopt a more realistic analysis: Northern Ireland was not under Westminster rule for Britain's own ends but because the majority of the population in the North wanted to remain British.

Sinn Fein's elevation in the 1980s, suggested McKittrick and Colin Brown, had prompted internal divisions and Brooke's remarks might have been an attempt to strengthen the hand of those republicans that wanted to develop the IRA's political strategy further:

> 'One possibility [behind Brooke's remarks] is that Mr. Brooke is seeking to promote the internal debate which is suspected to have been going on within Sinn Fein and the IRA. There has been speculation that republican opinions differ on whether to concentrate on violence or think more in terms of political activity.'[83]

On the face of it this analysis appears at odds with that of a Special Branch source – that Sinn Fein is a tactical device to win as many concessions as possible, while weakening state security for a possible return to war. This thesis, will conclude, however, that

[81] 'Offer of talks to Sinn Fein raises uproar', Daily Telegraph, 4th November 1989.
[82] Op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 242.
[83] McKittrick D., and Brown, C., 'Brooke hints at talks with Sinn Fein if violence ends', The Independent, 4th November 1989.

although it is still possible that the IRA might return to 'war', the current post September 11th 2001 environment and the resilient peace process has meant that the political front has ultimately come to represent a more moderate approach towards the use of violence – 'ultimately' because without the political part of the strategy in the 1980s and without the development of Sinn Fein in the 1990s, whether or not it represented moderation at the time, it did establish the *means* through which there could be a change of attitude if subsequent events dictated it, which, it is argued, they have done.

Whether or not Sinn Fein has come to represent moderation towards the use of violence, there is little doubt that the talks leading up to the Good Friday Agreement and the five years of negotiations since has greatly enhanced the utility of Sinn Fein. It should not be forgotten, however, that the threat of violence remains at the time of writing (June 2003). The three states' response has allowed and indeed encouraged the political front of the IRA to negotiate while it has been backed up by the implied threat of violence that an intact military structure represents.

In the early 1990s it became increasingly clear to the republican movement that conditions were emerging that would necessitate a ceasefire. Not only is it believed that the group was losing the 'intelligence war' against the state but for the first time loyalists were killing more republicans than the latter were killing security forces. In short the IRA's back was against the wall. If the organisation was being defeated militarily what were the alternatives? Sinn Fein had to be developed to pursue the struggle – not in tandem with IRA violence, but supported by *the threat of violence*. While the conclusion to this thesis argues that internal divisions have prevented the IRA from carrying out 'acts

of completion', the strategic value of the continuing threat of violence has certainly not been lost on the republican leadership. As Aughey has argued republicans may not have won the 'war' but they are trying to win the argument and this is where Sinn Fein's role has been of paramount importance.[84]

In the early 1990s the British government had two choices. Notwithstanding the earlier shift in the government's approach, it could have driven home the military advantage against the IRA. The Special Branch source believes that this could have been achieved. Or it could have negotiated with Sinn Fein to establish what would be required for republicans to engage in a peace process. Clearly, the former would have entailed risks when the IRA had a sizeable electoral mandate. The government pursued the less dogmatic approach of an all-inclusive peace process. Notably, after nearly a decade of negotiations and four and a half years since the GFA was signed, the IRA at the time of writing remains armed. It is fair to say that whereas violence was used to achieve republican goals, as noted above, this has been substituted with the threat of violence. Many find it difficult to believe that the IRA will disappear as a force until a united Ireland has been achieved.

For it is a fact that from the early 1990s Westminster was not just concerned with satisfying the demands of the law abiding majority of Catholics, but was also keen to rein in the minority republican movement that so threatened not just the province but also London and the mainland with bombs. That is why opinion polls that actually suggested

[84] Aughey, A., interview

that most Catholics did not object to RUC symbols[85] lose their relevance, and that is why Sinn Fein has had a disproportionately large influence on the peace negotiations. The legitimisation of extremism has meant that, at the time of writing, it is increasingly Sinn Fein and not the SDLP who the Catholic electorate look towards to play hardball when it comes to winning concessions for their community.

It is tempting at this point to compare the dilemma faced by the British government in the early 1990s with the situation faced by the Spanish authorities in the Basque region in 2002. One should be wary, however, of comparisons with the Basque case and the lessons to be drawn from it. Firstly, the Basque region forms part of mainland Spain whereas Northern Ireland is part of the island of Ireland and not part of the British mainland. Secondly, this has meant that there has been a much greater emotional attachment between Madrid and the region – evident in the mass marches in Madrid against ETA violence, something that has not happened in London over IRA and loyalist violence. Thirdly, Spain consists of a number of semi-autonomous regions – if demands for independence were met in the Basque country then this could have a knock on effect in the other regions, most notably Catalonia, and seriously threaten the national fabric of the rest of Spain. Fourthly, unlike ETA's demands, the IRA has fought for Irish unification and not for Northern Irish independence. Its desire for 'reunification' with another state is not a cause that can be replicated in other parts of the United Kingdom and so is less likely to provoke a severe knock on effect vis a vis the *independent* nationalists of Scotland and Wales. Fifthly, fifteen per cent of ETA's territorial claim actually includes part of France. Thus, any consideration of granting Basque

[85] A Belfast Telegraph poll taken in April 2000 showed that 61% of Catholics did not find the RUC name and symbols offensive, cited in 'RUC backed by 61pc of Catholics', Daily Telegraph, April 6th 2000.

independence by the Spanish would presumably be bitterly opposed by the French who would be faced with a newly independent hostile state in its backyard with the aim of annexing a piece of French territory! Therefore, whereas the British felt able to declare its neutrality over the question of Northern Ireland's constitutional status, for all the above reasons, the Spanish have unequivocally committed itself to national unity.

Despite these fundamental differences, it is nevertheless interesting to compare the situation in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s with that of Spain in 2002. In the former, having failed to marginalise Sinn Fein, Westminster engaged with republicans with the aim of drawing them into an overall inclusive settlement. This has had its risks with an enhanced and state assisted Sinn Fein mandate emerging at the same time as increasing loyalist disillusionment over the peace accord. For those who believed that the level of violence could not get worse than in the years of the 'Troubles', it did seem at times in 2002, with a growing Sinn Fein mandate and an increasingly marginalised loyalism, that such a possibility existed and that has been the gamble of the Good Friday Agreement. In the Spanish case Madrid, having offered everything it could reasonably have expected to for the reasons outlined above, has decided to outlaw Herri Batasuna, the political front of ETA and concentrate on a more draconian solution. This kind of harder line approach was available to the British but was turned down. Thus, it will be interesting to see what results the two very different types of response yield in the longer term. Certainly the British approach has facilitated and even encouraged the greater utility of the IRA's political front, whereas the latest Spanish response clearly has not.

Another aspect of the state's impact on the utility of a political front relates to the importance of adhering to the rule of law and democratic values when responding to terrorism. Where the state has fallen down in this area provides the insurgents with a propaganda boost that is best utilised through its political front. State over-reaction and over-zealousness and any extra legal activity have at times been features of the British response to the IRA. The introduction of internment and Bloody Sunday served to enhance republican propaganda and their particular assessment of events. So too have alleged miscarriages of justice, most famously exemplified in the Guildford four and Birmingham six cases. Its role in this regard has also been reinforced by criticism of the British government from human rights organisations.[86]

What gives Sinn Fein a particular utility in its propaganda role, however, are the allegations of security force collusion with loyalist terrorist groups in targeting republican activists and especially the activities of the Force Research Unit in this regard. Any truth in the allegations serves to sustain Sinn Fein's perception that the security forces, specifically the RUC Special Branch and the British army, are 'unionist death squads'. There have been numerous allegations of security documents that have somehow fallen into loyalist terrorist hands.[87] John Stevens, who was deputy Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, found that members of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) had been involved in collusion with loyalist paramilitaries but that the passing of information to

[86] Such as the Norwegian Helsinki Committee (see Coulter C., 'Britain violated human rights in NI – report', The Irish Times, August 9th 1989) and the United Nations Committee against Torture (Doyle, L. 'UN group condemns suspects' treatment', The Independent, November 16th 1991).

[87] See, for example, McKittrick, D., 'New leaks worsen Anglo-Irish relations', The Independent, September 23 1989, and Brown, C., and Reeves P., 'Security leak puts credibility of RUC and Army at risk', The Independent, August 31st 1989. More recently see Mullin, J., 'Loyalist gangs had security files', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , November 5th 1999.

them was 'neither widespread nor insitutionalised'.[88] In his latest enquiry Stevens has concluded that collusion took place in the murders of Pat Finucane and Adam Lambert.[89]

Such transgressions, perceived or otherwise, strengthen Sinn Fein's propaganda role – it has 'tried to demonstrate that every security force action against them is carried out under a secret scheme of 'state-sponsored terrorism' or 'official murder'. The rhetoric helps Sinn Fein cultivate support by portraying the British army as some sort of death squad. It also helps to obscure the fact that the IRA kills far more people in the province than any other organisation'.[90]

The propaganda function against the state is an important one but in the context of Northern Ireland it has even more significance. That is because circumstances have meant that the Catholic community to whom Sinn Fein are addressing in the domestic sphere are often willing listeners. Confidence in the security forces has often been low[91], largely because there has been such small representation amongst Catholics in the police force (barely exceeding 5%). Speaking of Bloody Sunday Professor Dermot Walsh of the University of Limerick stated that:

> 'The failure of the law and justice system to punish those responsible and provide redress for those who had been injured and the families of the deceased dealt a shattering blow to nationalist confidence in the rule of law ... For the nationalist

[88] Webster P., and Gorman, E., 'UDR leaked to terrorists says Stevens', The Times, May 18th 1990.
[89] Stevens Enquiry, Overview and Recommendations, April 17th 2003, from website: http://www.nuzhound.com .
[90] Gorman, E., 'Deadly years of undercover shootings', The Times, June 4th 1991.
[91] See McKittrick, D., 'Catholic confidence in Army's fairness slumps', The Independent, December 20th 1991. See also Merritt, J., 'Terror links dent UDR's credibility', Observer, May 29th 1988.

community as a whole it confirmed an established pattern of security force excesses going unpunished; a pattern which has continued from Bloody Sunday right up to the current peace process.'[92]

The sectarian divisions and tensions, particularly at 'interface' areas, in Northern Ireland are also something that republicans have been able to utilise as it seeks to deliver its message that the statelet is inherently unsustainable.

State transgressions are not just utilised by Sinn Fein for domestic propaganda purposes but they also help to sustain another hugely important function of the political front – its international dimension (see chapter 9). Irish-Americans have often been a willing audience when it comes to claims of state 'oppression' from Sinn Fein, and of course this international propaganda function is boosted through the claims of a security policy of 'shoot to kill' in the 1980s,[93] through allegations of security force/loyalist collusion in Catholic murders, miscarriages of justice and European court victories against the British government.[94]

It is clear that the state's response has been a fundamental factor in enhancing the utility of the IRA's political front, whether or not one believes that its use represents moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the movement. It has managed to secure a

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[92] Walsh, D., quoted in 'Tribunal opens its main hearings today', Irish Times, March 27th 2000.
[93] See, for example, Maguire, A., 'Full inquiry urged on IRA deaths', The Irish Times, June 4th 1991 and Adams J., Morgan, R., and Bambridge A., 'Shoot to Kill?', The Sunday Times, November 27th 1988. The 'Stalker inquiry' was established in 1982 to investigate allegations of a shoot to kill policy but Stalker was taken off the case in 1986, leading to the perception amongst many Catholics of a state cover up.
[94] Such as the European Court's ruling that the British government should pay compensation of 10,000 pounds each to the families of ten IRA men killed by the security forces after it concluded that inquiries into these deaths had been inadequate (see Evans, M., 'Payouts of £10,000 may 'open the floodgates'', The Times, May 5th 2001).

number of 'concessions' from the British government at the same time as weakening state structures. In other words while it has been alleged that the IRA has regrouped, retrained and rearmed in the course of the process the political front has managed to weaken the state's ability to respond to any return to 'war'. Even if there are no plans to return to violence the political front has arguably[95] managed to dilute the 'Britishness' of the province. It is this role of weakening the state's presence in Northern Ireland that has been one of the main functions of the political front and it is the state response from Westminster, Dublin and Washington that has facilitated this important function through the Good Friday Agreement and the current peace process.

The IRA, through Sinn Fein, has secured the release of nearly all of its prisoners, it has managed to procure two executive positions in the Northern Ireland executive, it has taken up office space at Westminster and received office expenses (worth approximately 100,000 pounds each for its four MPs), and it is currently negotiating amnesty for those IRA fugitives 'on the run'. It has also managed to demoralize the new Police Service of Northern Ireland, through police reform (with numerous early retirements and sickness absence)[96] that Sinn Fein is still not satisfied with. Indeed, it continues to try to undermine the police by calling for the abolition of the Full Time Police Reserve and Special Branch. It has also demanded that the policing and judicial powers should be devolved to Stormont. In addition, it has also been negotiating for former IRA terrorists and prisoners to be allowed to sit on the new District Policing Partnerships. This could potentially provide the IRA with a further intelligence gathering opportunity. Whether or

[95] By, for example, insisting on the reduction of British symbols and Union Jack flag flying from government buildings. Arguable, because it could be intimated that given that devolution exists for Wales and Scotland, and that the British-Irish Council brings together all three devolved governments, Northern Ireland's status within the United Kingdom might be seen as just as secure as that of Wales and Scotland.

not Sinn Fein represents moderation towards the use of violence (and this will be assessed in the conclusion) the political front's utility has reached new heights and it is the state that has directly facilitated this.

## The Loyalists

This chapter will assess the impact of the state's response on the strategy of the loyalist groups vis a vis the use of political fronts. First and foremost, it has been the inability of Westminster and the unionist government in Stormont to resolve the conflict that prompted some loyalists to work out for themselves how some sort of accommodation could be reached, and this prompted the use of political fronts for this purpose (such as the NUPRG). Indeed, disillusionment with the state's power sharing project in 1974 led to the UWC strike which in turn gave loyalists a new found confidence. This, along with the British government's traditional 'arms length approach' to the North and emotional detachment from the province, prompted the idea of 'negotiated independence.' Secondly, loyalist group strategy has often been a reaction to republican strategy (see Chapter 9) and so one could assume that the state's response to the IRA would have an impact on the approaches of the UDA and the UVF. The state's response in the early 1970s, for example, helped to polarize the conflict to such a degree that there was no utility in having loyalist political fronts, particularly when these have generally represented a sign of moderation. Finally, the state sponsored peace process in the 1990s elevated the roles of the loyalist political fronts to an unprecedented degree because it

[96] See Cusack, J., 'Low morale in RUC sees top officers getting out', Irish Times, February 13th, 2001.

was vital that the UDA and UVF called ceasefires and equally important that they were sustained.

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It was the Northern Ireland state that contributed to the fracturing of the monolithic nature of unionism, that ultimately led to the loyalist political ventures of the 1970s. Traditionally 'the PWC [Protestant Working Class] [believed] that its livelihood rested upon its support for the Stormont Government'[97] but as Sean McKee stated, 'clearly the progressive steps by O'Neill did not seem at all palatable to the loyalist community and so the beginnings of a fracturing of the all-class alliance that was the unionist 'family' was set in motion.'[98]

But as the civil disturbances worsened the UK government became increasingly concerned. That meant that the unionist establishment had to look more and more over its shoulder. As David Boulton wrote of the UVF:

> 'When the UVF began to kill catholics in 1966 and Paisley's and Bunting's Volunteers attacked civil rights marchers in 1968, they were acting out the traditional role of the ascendancy class's bully-boys. It was a natural reflex in times of trouble. But the Unionist leadership could no longer afford to approve or condone such reflexes since its survival had come to depend less on lumpen support at home than on approval from Westminster. So the UVF was proscribed

[97] McAuley, J., 'Cuchullain and an RPG-7: the ideology and politics of the Ulster Defence Association', in Hughes, E., Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1991, p. 47.

and Paisleyism denounced as fascism. The result was an unprecedented rift in the coalition of classes on which Unionist supremacy was dependent, with Paisley heading up a new working-class Unionism.'[99]

This fracturing of unionism was manifested in the creation of Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party which was to be 'on the right on constitutional issues and on the left on social issues.'[100]

'Clearly the rift arose from tactical, not social differences: the protestant working class broke with O'Neill because he was soft on catholics, not because he left protestant workers in slum houses. But the social chemistry of the situation was such that, once a rift had opened up, the protestant working-class began to become aware of specific class issues. They began, slowly, to develop a class consciousness. And they began to feel their strength as a class, distinctive and separate from middle-class Unionists.'[101]

So this rupturing of what had been a monolith, which had its roots in the attempts by O'Neill to introduce reforms, laid the conditions whereby working class loyalists could be used as the 'muscle' behind hardline but 'respectable' unionism, and it was ultimately the loyalists' awareness that they were being 'used' by Paisley and others that prompted them to seek a political voice of their own through their political fronts. It was the feeling

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[98] McKee, S., 'The Real Voice of Ulster Loyalism? The Progressive Unionist Party', M Litt Dissertation, University of Ulster, 1995, p. 2.
[99] Boulton, D., The UVF 1966-73, An Anatomy Of Loyalist Rebellion, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973, p. 186.
[100] Op. cit. Bew and Gillespie p. 40. This is not to suggest that there were not other differences other than class within unionism such as those that revolved around religious, town and country issues.
[101] Op. cit. Boulton p. 186.

that they could no longer rely on politicians to adequately represent them that underpinned their ventures into politics.

If loyalist strategy has often been determined by IRA strategy which in turn has to some degree been determined by the state's response, then it would follow that the state's response to the IRA would have an indirect impact on UDA and UVF strategy. Its response was so counterproductive in the early 1970s, through the 'Rape of the Falls', internment without trial, and Bloody Sunday that it facilitated the emergence of the IRA as a force which in turn hardened attitudes on the loyalist side. When one considers that the loyalist political fronts did generally represent moderation towards the use of violence, then the polarized environment of the early 1970s would certainly not have encouraged their use. Moreover, the loyalist perception that the government was not dealing adequately with the threat that the IRA posed and its fear that the UK was about to betray unionism through its secret negotiations with the group also militated against the use of loyalist political fronts in the early 1970s.

It was out of this mistrust for the security forces that the UDA emerged as an amalgamation of a number of 'defence' associations. In early 1972, as the crisis swelled out of control, William Craig's Ulster Vanguard was formed to unify unionists of all hues under one umbrella to show the IRA that it meant business. Though on the surface the organisation was apparently 'respectable' Craig's rousing and provocative speeches, talking of '[liquidating] the enemy'[102], like Paisley's rhetoric, prompted many young loyalists to take up arms. This was the political leadership that members of the UDA and

[102] Quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 98.

the UVF paid homage to. To loyalists it was these senior 'constitutional' politicians that gave the two groups legitimacy for their activities.

The Irish Republic's response to the crisis helped polarize the situation further. There was apparently 'a plan by the Eire Government to put its troops across the Ulster border and stage an 'international incident'. They would then call upon the United Nations to intervene, and should loyalists permit this to happen, it would ultimately spell the end of the Northern Ireland state ... that such a plan existed was later confirmed by Neil Blaney.'[103] According to Garland 'this type of information was being spread throughout the Loyalist community and further inflamed fears.'[104] As is so often the case in Northern Ireland perception became fact and these early rumours made their own contribution to an environment that again would not have been conducive to loyalist political fronts.

The pivotal point in loyalism's recent history as far as the emergence of the loyalist political fronts is concerned was the 1974 Ulster Workers Council strike. It was this event that gave loyalists a new found confidence and prompted some of them to think politically for themselves. It was a response to the state's Sunningdale initiative and it was the failure of the state to secure a political settlement that had, indirectly at least, brought about the new 'political' emphasis in loyalist thinking.

In the 1970s, however, it wasn't just the unionists that tried to undermine the loyalist forays into politics by labelling them as communists. According to Bruce:

[103] Belfast Telegraph, 31st May 1990 cited in Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, p. 8.

> 'The British army's black propaganda unit stirred the pot nicely by inventing the Ulster Citizens' Army (UCA), supposedly a left-wing loyalist terror group and circulating statements, purportedly from the UCA, accusing leading UVF and UDA men of various crimes against their own people. It even claimed Herron and another murdered UDA leader, Ernie 'Duke' Elliot, as UCA men by placing *in memoriam* notices in the *Belfast Telegraph* in the UCA's name. The rural evangelical unionists, who see republicanism and communism as two wings of the Catholic Church's long war against the true gospel, previously responded to any progressive noises from the paramilitaries by accusing them of being unpatriotic. It was even rumored (sic) that the UDA's *Common Sense* had republican input. If loyalist spokesmen continue to impress the public we can expect a revival of that sort of attack [in the 1990s].'[105]

It is quite ironic that this type of 'black propaganda' activity seemed to be going on at the same time as the British government tried to persuade the UVF to become more political by deproscribing the organisation in 1974.

An important state initiative that had more of a direct impact on the utility of loyalist political fronts was the Anglo-Irish Agreement. To unionists, like the dreaded Council of Ireland dimension of Sunningdale, it threatened the constitutional status of the province – the one issue that combined unionists of all hues – and it led to the reversion to stereotypical roles. Indeed James McAuley argued that unionist hegemony is always

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Bruce S., 'Paramilitaries, Peace, and Politics: Ulster Loyalists and the 1994 Truce' in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 18, p. 200. Bruce does not outline the army's reason for trying to portray loyalist

likely to reconstruct itself 'when a threat is perceived to the constitutional position.'[106] Thus, the underlying monolithic nature of unionism would come to the fore and squeeze out political initiatives or political involvement from the loyalist paramilitary groups. One reason for *Common Sense* not being taken seriously, and also why the UDLP failed to generate electoral support after 1985, was that 'the violence in protests against the Anglo-Irish accord had undermined the UDA's claims to be taken seriously as a constitutional political force.'[107] The UDA and UVF statements threatening to kill those who collaborated[108] represented attempts to make sure that they did have at least some role in opposing the AIA and that meant a reversion to what it did best - organising riots and violence.[109]

The situation was to change dramatically with the onset of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. The extent to which the US, the Irish Republic and the British government have enhanced the utility of Sinn Fein has been outlined above. The same was true of the loyalist groups. John Major wrote that the exploratory dialogue from December 1994 also entailed finding 'an acceptable basis for ... the two small loyalist parties, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), to join the constitutional talks on an equal basis as democratic and law-abiding participants.'[110] After the end of the IRA ceasefire, and with the loyalist groups 'straining

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politicos as communist but just refers to it '[stirring] the pot nicely', though the implication appears to be that unionist politicians had some influence over the 'propaganda unit'.

[106] Op. cit. McAuley p. 52.

[107] Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 242.

[108] See ibid. pp. 236-7.

[109] Although in the short term the agreement undermined the prospects for the loyalist political fronts it is possible to contend that the opposite was the case in the longer term. It could be argued that the rise in loyalist violence increased pressure on the IRA, which in turn contributed to the ceasefires that were to give the loyalist political fronts a greater role.

[110] Major, J., John Major, The Autobiography, Harper Collins, London, 1999, p. 469.

at the leash', 'it was essential to have their political representatives at the table if we were to keep them on-side and off terrorism'.[111] The utility of their political fronts was boosted considerably, therefore, because they were the political representatives of the two loyalist terrorist groups, whose continued ceasefires were imperative to the peace process. From the two groups' point of view they also provided the means through which they could have access to the very top of the British political hierarchy. Moreover, the Good Friday Agreement represented the type of accommodation that the PUP and the UDP (and the UPRG and UDLP before it) had been proposing since the 1970s. In short the state response to the conflict had given the loyalist political fronts a much greater role in the 1990s.

In the post Good Friday Agreement period, however, loyalists have become disillusioned by what they have seen as 'outside agreement' deals between the British government and Sinn Fein.[112] The perception that Downing Street has pandered to republicans and that loyalists have been increasingly sidelined from the process has placed enormous pressure on the utility of the two groups' political fronts. Indeed, the UDA's apparent disillusionment with the peace process led to the dissolving of the UDP in November 2001 while the PUP has also come under severe strain. David Ervine has stated that he's no longer sure that the UVF shares his pro peace process political analysis.[113]

[111] Ibid. p. 490.
[112] As argued by David Ervine (interview).
[113] Ervine, D., 'Ervine warns of 'crisis' in Northern peace process', The Irish Times, May 10th 2002.

## The UDA

In order to fully understand UDA strategy it is important to assess government policy and security force response for its impact. There are two important factors that underpinned the strategy of the UDA. The first, (see chapter 9), is that it was very much a direct response to the violence of the IRA. The second is that it was also a reaction to the perception that British security forces were not doing enough to counter the republican threat. As the IRA murder campaign and sectarian riots escalated the loyalists increasingly felt that the security forces were failing to protect their communities. Indeed it was this that led to the formation of the original 'Defence' organisations in the first place.

It was also the rumours of secret negotiations and meetings with republicans that aroused the suspicion of loyalists and this, along with the 'hands off' approach that the government had taken towards the province, contributed to the evolving perception that the mainland did not care much for Northern Irish unionism and the Republic did not care much for Northern Catholics. The idea that Westminster was emotionally detached from the province, therefore, underpinned the UPRG and then the ULDP's innovation of an Independent Ulster.

The government's failed initiative of 1973-4 was to have an indirect impact on UDA strategy. It was the failure of the state (aswell as constitutional unionism) to resolve the conflict coupled with the new found confidence that the UDA managed to acquire from the successful UWC strike that led some of their leaders to think more politically. Thus

the UDA's political fronts, while they were attempts to represent the loyalist working class politically, were also the result of the failure of the state, as well as unionist politicians, to resolve the conflict or come up with a workable solution.

The new rapprochement between Margaret Thatcher and Charles Haughey in 1980 marked the beginning of closer cooperation between Westminster and Leinster House that was ultimately to lead to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. To much of unionism and loyalism the perception was that if London and Dublin became closer that meant a united Ireland was on its way.[114] Despite protestations from Ian Paisley, the relationship was consolidated between Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald and when the Agreement was eventually signed the monolith of unionism reemerged in all out opposition that left little room for UDA 'politics'.

As noted above, the peace process gave the UDP a whole new profile. Through its articulate leaders, Gary McMichael and Davey Adams, the party enjoyed a degree of electoral success and an elevated profile as the political voice of the UDA, whose ceasefire was crucial to the success of the peace process. This role was to be shortlived, however, although the state's policy can only be partly responsible for this. While loyalists may have felt sidelined by the political process in the post GFA period the support of the UDA for this process was always going to depend on how much the decentralised and fragmented structure of its organisation could be kept in tow.

[114] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 172.

The change in the leadership of the Ulster Political Research Group[115] after the expulsion of Adair from the organisation, and the UDA's new ceasefire, appear to have brought the organisation back into the peace process fold. This time, however, the political front may have been used as a tactic to take attention away from the criminal exploits of the group. Adair had brought so much media attention to himself and the organisation's activities that the UDA's apparent resurgent political bona fides may simply be an attempt to deflect attention away from these nefarious activities, particularly when the government's Assets Recovery Agency has just (February 2003) begun its work. Thus, despite the pro-state nature of the loyalist groups, one shouldn't discount the possibility that their political fronts too can be used as tactical devices and as propaganda outlets. In this case political pronouncements from the UDA's political front and an apparent interest in a political settlement may just be a cover to disguise and protect the illegal criminal empires that it has established (echoing the 1980s when it was argued that the group's political announcements were only a cover for such activities), while the UPRG has also been used to deny UDA involvement in sectarian attacks.[116]

## The UVF

The year 1974 was an important one as far as the state's impact on the utility of political fronts was concerned. Garland states that 'Francis Pym, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland invited the UVF [and Sinn Fein] to 'come in from the cold' on 16 February 1974. His statement was seen in both Loyalist and Republican circles as making

[115] The UPRG was actually formed by John White, an ally of Adair, but when Adair and White were thrown out of the UDA the UPRG's leadership changed hands.
[116] See 'UDA ceasefire 'is not broken'', Belfast Telegraph, March 13th 2003.

it possible for the UVF [and Sinn Fein] to take part in political negotiations for the future.'[117] By legalising Sinn Fein and the UVF the hope was that this would encourage the republican and loyalist terrorists to think more politically. The object was to:

> '[allow] both organizations to participate in the political process ... Nevertheless, while welcoming the decision and recognizing that there was a need to develop a political party of its own, the UVF maintained that it had to remain an armed force ... A few days later, it dipped its toe in the political water by announcing that it would cause widespread disturbance unless bus fares in Belfast were reduced'.[118]

Arthur Aughey stated that much of the political inspiration amongst loyalist groups was government sponsored to encourage loyalists to think politically, but this was a very superficial activity – 'the crust on top of the violent volcano was very thin.'[119] This seemed to be evident in the horrific Dublin and Monaghan bombs that the UVF planted in May 1974.

The Ulster Workers Council strike, according to Ervine, prompted the government to further persuade the UVF to become politically involved:

[117] Op. cit. Garland p. 25.
[118] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 124.
[119] Aughey, A., interview.

> 'The Government saw further merit and urgency in encouraging political development after the U.W.C. strike, which had brought home how much political power could be wielded by non-conventional Protestant groups.'[120]

Although it was the defeat of the Sunningdale agreement by the UWC strike that provided the impetus for subsequent loyalist political fronts (because it was a breakthrough for loyalist working class consciousness), these government overtures also encouraged the UVF to think more politically.

There were, however, obstacles to overcome. Unionist politicians were alarmed by the new confidence of the loyalist working class and were only too willing to smear their political thinking as communism.[121] But, paradoxically, while the government tried to bring the UVF into politics to some in the British establishment it seemed that if this meant anything to do with socialism then it had to be undermined. Roy Garland noted:

> 'In the [Sunday News 19.1.75] ... reference was made to the discovery of a 'restricted Ministry of Defence document' which 'showed clearly that the army regard its operations in Ireland as counter-revolutionary aimed at rooting out the Communist menace.' This lends support to the view of Wallace, Foot, Holroyd and others that elements in the security forces were fighting their own war and fighting it within [this] ideological framework ... The UVF had been one of its victims'.[122]

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[120] Ervine, D., quoted in op. cit. McKee p. 5
[121] See Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, pp. 27-8.
[122] Ibid. p. 35.

This served as a reminder that in the big scheme of things communism was the great 'evil' of the day and any group that was remotely associated with class struggle would have difficulty getting accepted. The UVF was not communist, however, although it suited unionist politicians to have people think otherwise.

The dismal failure of the VPP prompted the UVF to disregard political involvement for the time being. In the meantime, the IRA truce of 1975 rejuvenated fears of a government sellout and so loyalists intensified their level of violence in an effort to provoke the IRA to break its ceasefire. The tit for tat bombings that followed were hardly the sort of environment in which loyalist political fronts could develop. This was especially the case when the notorious 'Shankhill butchers' under Lenny Murphy emerged from within the UVF to commit the most blatantly sectarian and gruesome murders of the Troubles.

The PUP was also swallowed up in the broad unionist solidarity against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, although the episode served to confirm to the party that once again the UVF was being used by mainstream politicians:

> 'We cannot allow our position to go by default as happened in 1985. We must give direction and leadership and we have an opportunity to develop an equitable, pluralist society.'[123]

As with the UDP the peace process elevated the role of the PUP to an unprecedented level. Unlike the UDP, however, the party has survived despite the perception that

[123] Progressive Unionist Party website quoted in McAuley J.,and Hislop, S., ' 'Many roads forward': Politics and Ideology within the Progressive Unionist Party', Etudes Irlandaises, Spring 2000.

loyalists have been sidelined from the peace process, primarily because the UVF is a more disciplined and centralised group than the UDA and because it does have two seats in the Legislative Assembly. It is vital, however, that loyalists are included in the political process if the role of the PUP is to be sustained or strengthened.

## Conclusion

It was the constitutional instability of the province that derived from the 'state' in Northern Ireland, with two states laying claim to the same territory, along with Westminster's traditional 'detachment' from the province, that provided a boost to would-be extremists on both sides. Nevertheless, the value of Anglo-Irish cooperation was evident through internment without trial on both sides of the border in the 1956-62 campaign. The states' security response had defeated the IRA prompting the group to reevaluate its strategy with the aim of recouping lost support. Although this did entail an expanded role for Sinn Fein it was no longer to be a 'front' but was part of the leftward drift of Goulding's IRA.

The state's response was very different in the early 1970s. The 'rape of the falls', internment without trial and Bloody Sunday all served to polarize the conflict and militated against the use of political fronts. So too did the Irish Republic's response which also helped to stir up loyalist emotions and republican aspirations of Dublin intervention.

The deproscription of Sinn Fein in 1974 was designed to encourage the 'politicians' in the republican movement at the expense of the militarists but it enabled the IRA to use its political front as an extra weapon in its struggle to rid the British from the island in the decades ahead. The failure of the truce of 1975 and the government's 'deception' by apparently pretending to withdraw from the province confirmed the IRA's scepticism of the political sphere. This did not, however, mean that the role of Sinn Fein was therefore restricted. In fact the opposite was the case as Adams sought to expand the struggle to all fronts as well as the military one. The confirmation that the British state was not intending to leave the province and the republican view that the IRA came closest to defeat at this time had forced the movement to think more in the longer term and this entailed an expanded role for the political front. The truce did, however, lead to the establishment of Sinn Fein incident centres that would subsequently be utilised for the new strategy.

The removal of special category status for terrorist prisoners through the policy of Ulsterisation, normalisation and criminalisation led to a series of events that were to have a profound effect on IRA strategy. It was the issue that prompted republican prisoners to launch a 'dirty' protest and then the hunger strikes of 1981 which in turn led to Sands' successful by-election. It was this pivotal event that persuaded the IRA to go to the polls.

So concerned was the British government at the success of Sinn Fein that they sought to marginalise extremism and bolster the centre ground of Northern Irish politics through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This was perhaps somewhat ironic given the fact that a decade earlier Sinn Fein was legalised in an effort to strengthen the hand of the 'politicos' in the movement. Now the government tried to curtail the political front's

success and therefore its utility to the Army Council. Although the AIA failed to make a serious dent in the electorate of the party the government persisted in trying to halt Sinn Fein's progress by imposing a media ban on the voices of terrorist groups.

Peter Brooke's remarks, however, declaring that the United Kingdom had no 'selfish or strategic' interest in Northern Ireland represented a shift in the government's policy that was to ultimately bring mainstream republicanism into an all-inclusive peace process and this was to give the political front an unprecedented role, whether or not it represented moderation towards the use of violence. The legitimisation of Sinn Fein and indeed the republican struggle through the peace process (by the UK, the Irish Republic and the US) has, it is argued, been the main factor behind the party's electoral success. This legitimisation has enabled the party to negotiate as the 'tough lawyer' for the Catholic community and thereby gain support at the expense of the moderate SDLP. It has also enabled the political front to be used as the means to gain a number of concessions for the IRA while, at the time of writing, the threat of violence remains.

The British state has at times also facilitated Sinn Fein's domestic and international propaganda function through its own transgressions in response to the terrorist threat – whether it be through episodes like Bloody Sunday or the internment of the early 1970s, miscarriages of justice such as the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six cases, shoot to kill allegations, or perhaps most serious of all the real and perceived collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitary groups. Added to this is the fact that the Catholic population as a whole have had little confidence in the security forces and so it has at times constituted a willing audience receptive to republican propaganda.

Thus, the state has certainly facilitated the greater utilisation of the political front of the IRA – through Sinn Fein's legalisation in 1974, the establishment of Sinn Fein incident centres in 1975 and, after trying to marginalise the party during the 1980s, through enticing the republican movement into an all-inclusive settlement to the conflict. The British government (along with the Irish and American administrations) have directly encouraged the greater use of the IRA's political front, whether or not this has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence.

As far as the loyalist groups are concerned the roots of their political fronts can be traced to the break-up of the monolith of unionism when O'Neill tried to introduce reforms. Henceforth the unionist 'right' were to provide the political voice of working class loyalism. To some within the loyalist groups, however, it became increasingly clear that loyalist workers were being 'manipulated' by politicians like Paisley and Craig. This, and the failure of the state to resolve the conflict, prompted some loyalists to think more politically, particularly after the UWC strike of 1974, with the aim of somehow reaching accommodation with the 'enemy'. These impulses, such as the the UDA's notion of 'negotiated independence', were underpinned by Westminster's traditional and continuing emotional detachment from the province.

The violence of the two loyalist groups, however, has been reactionary and has often been determined by the perceived inadequacy of the British government's response to republicans, or fears of a secret deal between the two, as well as the level of IRA violence. The 1975 IRA truce, for example, prompted the UVF (who feared a secret deal) to try to draw the IRA back into conflict. Their political fronts therefore, which partly

represented attempts to seek accommodation with their enemies, were prey to the imperatives of reactionary loyalist violence that would undermine their attempts to achieve political 'respectability' in the midst of a 'law abiding' community.

The AIA of 1985 was to have a negative impact on the loyalist political fronts[124] as the Agreement was so universally opposed by unionists that it had the effect of temporarily resurrecting the monolith of unionism. This left the loyalist groups with no other role than their traditional one. Such was the strength of political opposition to the AIA the only option left to the groups if they were to have any relevance at all was to oppose the accord with violence or the threat of violence.

The response of the state in the 1990s, however, was to have a direct impact on the utility of the loyalist political fronts. As with Sinn Fein, it was vital that the PUP and the UDP should remain fully engaged with the peace process if the ceasefires of their respective organisations were to hold. As such the profiles and utility of these fronts reached unprecedented levels. The new political dispensation, however, did not include any UDP representation in the Assembly and this was a factor in the eventual demise of the party, although the UDA's decentralised and fragmented structure of illegal fiefdoms (see chapter 4) had more to do with this. The unionist and loyalist perception that since the Good Friday Agreement was signed the state has been drip-feeding concessions to Sinn Fein and the IRA has led to a loss of faith in the peace process within the UVF and this, correspondingly, has put pressure on the Progressive Unionist Party, whose spokesperson, David Ervine, continually warns of disillusionment within the group.

# Chapter 9 - The External Environment – Other Factors

The previous two chapters have sought to assess the impact of state response and popular support on the strategies of the IRA, UDA and UVF vis a vis their use of a political front. This chapter seeks to broaden the external environment by briefly assessing the impact of the international environment (the US and Libya)[1] and other factors in the domestic environment. In the case of the IRA 'other factors' includes the loyalist response in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the growth of the SDLP, the hunger strikes of 1981 and Sinn Fein's potential electorate and changes to it. It will be argued that Bobby Sands' by election victory and President Clinton's engagement with Sinn Fein have both been hugely significant in bringing about the greater utility of the political front. It is the domestic external environment that has had the most significant impact on the utility of the loyalist political fronts. The problem of being pro-state, the law abiding nature of unionism, the division of labour ethos within unionism, and the actions of and loyalist response to the IRA, have all been powerful obstacles to the development of loyalist political fronts. Yet, it was the perceived changing nature of the relationship between working class loyalism and 'respectable' unionism that spawned them.

[1] This is not to argue that there were not other factors in the international environment that might have an impact on the utility of political fronts (such as the end of the Cold War – see note 81) but the US' role, it is argued, has been enormously significant in bringing about the greater utility of Sinn Fein (and indeed the loyalist fronts), and the Libyan relationship with the IRA has also directly affected the latter's strategy.

It is worth noting some aspects of the social history of the two communities that may also have had some bearing on the role and utility of political fronts on both the loyalist and republican sides. History, religion, culture and economic development had all combined 'to produce two distinct communities'[2] or as Lyons puts it, a 'clash of cultures'.[3] James Dingley, a sociologist at the University of Ulster, has highlighted the enormous cultural difference between unionism and nationalism.[4] Most significant is the notion that the majority community in Northern Ireland is permeated by an individualistic ethos that champions hard work and individual achievement.[5] This was borne out in the industrial revolution in the North and the growth of large manufacturing industries such as Harland and Wolff.[6] Amongst the loyalist working classes there has been an emphasis on communalism as opposed to communism. While they may have hated their unionist employers they would have no truck with Catholics. Thus, Dingley contrasts the 'scientific' socialism of loyalists to the 'romantic' socialism of nationalists.[7]

In short the 'community' ethos prevalent in the minority community in the North would lend itself to a greater role for a political front, whereas the individualistic ethos in unionism generally would not. As Aughey noted that when referring to the type of relationship between the UDA and the UVF and their political fronts, it is more about a bunch of individuals rather than any institutionalised cross membership. By contrast Sinn Fein is part of a social movement with a strong notion of community. This is mirrored by Dingley's observation that there are few Catholics in the engineering and natural science

[2] Buckland, P., A History of Northern Ireland, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1981, p. 6.
[3] Lyons, F., Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, p. 24.
[4] Dingley, J., interview.
[5] See 'Ulster: the Roots of Difference' (chapter 5) in op. cit. Lyons.

fields but there are more who are affiliated to the arts. The converse is generally the case for Protestants.

# The IRA

## The Loyalist Response

The first factor that is well worth considering for its impact on the utility of an IRA political front is the loyalist response to the civil rights marches of the late 1960s and how the perceived imminence of pogroms against Catholic areas pushed any idea of politics to the background. This, it is contended, would even have limited the use of a political front as a tactical device as some of the subsequent tactical roles of Sinn Fein would not have helped to address, and indeed might have drawn time and effort away from, the perceived impending crisis. The loyalist response therefore, whipped up by Paisley and Craig,[8] helped to polarize the brewing conflict between the two communities in Northern Ireland and this militated against the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein.

It would be incomplete to refer to this seemingly unreasonable loyalist attitude without making reference to the unionist 'seige mentality' and the insecurity of the unionist

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[6] See op. cit. Buckland p. 5.
[7] Dingley, J., interview.
[8] Paul Arthur ponders the degree to which 'Northern Ireland was a relatively mild and insulated form of 'paranocracy' (Arthur, P., 'The Heath government and Northern Ireland', in Ball, S., and Seldon, A., The Heath Government 1970-74, Longman, London, p. 256.) 'in which the basis of power was the successful appeal to paranoid fears in the Protestant electorate about the political, social, philosophical and military potential of their Catholic neighbours' (Heskin, K., Northern Ireland: A Psychological Analysis, Dublin, 1981, pp. 100-2.)

population in general. The Protestant community's underlying anxiety is borne of a centuries old fear of forming a minority within the island of Ireland against the traditional adversarial Catholic 'menace'. It is the fear of being overwhelmed by Catholicism and its 'narrow' practices that underpins unionist opposition to a united Ireland. This is exacerbated by suspicions that the British government might abandon the province and leave them at the mercy of Dublin and 'Rome rule'.

No better is this siege mentality exemplified than during the Parades season and particularly in the tense stand-offs at Drumcree. The founder of the 'Spirit of Drumcree' group explained:

> 'In many ways it's not about 800 Orangemen marching down a road. It's about the survival of a culture, of an identity, of a way of life ... The Ulster people have their backs against the wall.'[9]

Lennon confirms that the experience of the Protestant community over the last 200 years has been one of the loss of power and influence with a fear of the South, of Catholics and of an IRA re-emergence.[10] Coupled with this insecurity is the view that, as Rose points out, Protestants may view discrimination is less about the fact but about what is fair[11] - if nationalists and republicans are out to destroy Northern Ireland then why should they expect equal rights from the constitution they are seeking to repudiate?

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[9] Patton, J., quoted in Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 239.
[10] Lennon, B., After the Ceasefires, Catholics and the Future of Northern Ireland, Colombia Press, Dublin, 1995, p. 20.
[11] Rose, R., Governing Without Consensus, An Irish Perspective, Faber and Faber, London, 1971, p. 273.

One could argue that it was the loyalist response to the civil rights movement that was the single most important factor that ignited the spark that led to the re emergence of the IRA as a significant force in the early 1970s. Paisley's rhetoric, lambasting NICRA as a cover for the IRA and advertising it as a surreptitious route to a united Ireland, and the loyalists who responded helped to enable republicans to transform a conflict that arose over civil rights within the United Kingdom into a violent clash between separatism and unionism. Very few Catholics were countenancing an end to partition before the situation became so polarized. As Rose points out the civil rights marchers were doing the opposite of what Sinn Fein was trying to do –they were attempting to claim full rights as UK citizens.[12]

NICRA was concerned with equality for Catholics. It is true that there were IRA members in NICRA but they certainly did not dominate the organisation.[13] It is also true that the People's Democracy's ultimate goal was the replacement of both the Stormont and Dublin regimes with an Irish Workers' Republic[14] but nor did this organisation by any means represent the mainstream of the civil rights movement. Thus, it would be no exaggeration to suggest that the loyalist response not only helped the IRA come into being as a revitalised organisation once more but also created another chapter of real and perceived injustice against the Catholic population that republicans could draw upon and use as propaganda to support Sinn Fein's role in this regard.

Not only did the brutal response to the civil rights movement increase support for the IRA but so too did Paisley's denigration of the one party that might have taken support

[12] Ibid. p. 156.
[13] See Bishop, P., and Mallie, E., The Provisional IRA, London: Corgi, 1992, pp. 72-3.

away from militant republicanism – the SDLP. Labelling the party 'republican' he rejected out of hand Faulkner's attempts in 1971 to bring the moderate nationalist party into Northern Ireland's government through the creation of three new committees, two of which were to be chaired by the SDLP.[15] Paisley's reaction to even this meagre concession to the SDLP was bound to be counterproductive. Hardline unionist politicians' inability to be reasonable with the constitutional Catholic party was bound to discredit the party within its own community, deeming them perhaps irrelevant and leaving the IRA further strengthened. There is no doubt that such intransigence helped create the conditions for the IRA to reap enough popular support for a strategy of violence alone and one that militated against any political enterprise.

Paddy Devlin explained that 'in 1970 you weren't relevant in Ardoyne or up the Falls unless you were giving up flame-throwers'[16]. To give some indication of how polarized the situation was becoming, 'while republicanism was still split and bereft of anything resembling political organisation', even members of the 'moderate' SDLP were joining Citizens' Defence Committees:[17]

> 'The times did not favour the organisation of traditional political parties: the huge movement of people displaced by initimidation and the burnings of 1969 went on shifting, settling and resettling throughout much of the seventies ... In 1974 a Community Relations Commission Report said that firm evidence existed of

[14] Op. cit. Rose p. 159.
[15] Kelley, K., The Longest War, Northern Ireland and the IRA, Zed Press, London, 1982, p. 152.
[16] Devlin, P., quoted in O'Connor, F., In Search Of A State, Catholics In Northern Ireland, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1995, p. 64.

8,180 families forced to evacuate their homes in the greater Belfast area between August 1969 and February 1973, 80 per cent of which they estimated to be Catholic.'[18]

In these circumstances there was less room for political activity. While memories of Goulding's discredited 'political approach' were also still fresh in the mind violence seemed to be the order of the day where politics was seen as a sign of weakness. Also strategies that entailed utilisation of a political front take time to develop and the imminence of violence against Catholics meant a preoccupation with defence and attack against those that threatened the perceived elimination of the minority community. In short, the domestic external environment in the early 1970s facilitated a violence alone strategy and not greater utilisation of it's political front beyond its propaganda and vigilante functions.

## The SDLP

The second 'other factor' was the formation of the Social and Democratic Labour Party and its emergence as the main political representative (until 2001) of the Catholic population. The party was launched in August 1970 under the leadership of Gerry Fitt and was an amalgamation of the old Republican Labour, Northern Ireland Labour and Nationalist parties as well as Independents. It promoted left of centre policies and called for Irish reunification but with majority consent. Rejecting the use of violence, it saw

[17] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 64.
[18] Ibid.

itself as an alternative to street politics and the physical force tradition of republicanism and sought to bring politics back to parliament.

The emergence of the SDLP is important because its existence and fortunes have had a direct impact on republican considerations over the utility of the ballot box and therefore greater utilisation of its political front. Ever since the imposition of partition the IRA has long claimed to represent the Catholic population, especially after their 'defensive' role in the early 1970s. As noted above, this has meant that they had everything to lose by putting this assertion to the test, particularly when the reality was that it would be disproved by the SDLP, and not much to gain because they had in any case already claimed to represent the minority community. A longstanding reason, therefore, for the IRA's refusal to adopt an electoral strategy has been fear of failure.

As noted above, 'it took the unwelcome initiative of the prisoners in starting a hunger strike for political status to force a reluctant leadership into electoral politics.'[19] Sands' success conquered the IRA's fear of losing at the ballot box and the organisation now believed that they could credibly claim to represent a substantial constituency, a claim that they would have found difficult to substantiate in the past. Thus while republicans did not in fact poll as well as the SDLP they were able to command a sizeable part of the nationalist electorate and so exorcised their fear of the ballot box.

After the imposition of Direct Rule Bishop and Mallie argue that the attraction of the post Stormont SDLP was a contributory factor in the IRA losing popular support by the

Spring of 1972. [20] Indeed, as the Sunningdale project[21] was getting off the ground Ruairi O'Bradaigh, President of Sinn Fein, was vexed by 'the support that the power sharing agreement was generating for the SDLP'[22] and divisions arose as to how best to counter it. Many republicans believed that the SDLP had won concessions and votes on the back of the IRA and were resentful for this.[23] [24] This frustration led to considerations for some kind of electoral engagement to fend off the SDLP from would be Sinn Fein supporters. The fear of being exposed as not after all representing the Catholic population and the belief that it would divert people from the real source of IRA legitimacy – the British presence in Ireland – meant that the electoral option, and thus a greater role for Sinn Fein, was rejected.

It was a dilemma that was to resurface in 1981 but this time the IRA took its chances at the polls. Henceforth the group's performance at the ballot box would affect the degree to which mainstream republicans would have faith in the electoral project, and therefore Sinn Fein's expanded role. The performance and tactics of the SDLP were therefore of direct relevance as a factor in the domestic external environment. Most notably pressure was put on Sinn Fein with the emergence of the SDLP-inspired New Ireland Forum which then led to the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The objective of the AIA was to strengthen moderate nationalism in the North which meant undermining the bullet and ballot box strategy of the IRA and Sinn Fein. This in turn put pressure on the

[19] Op. cit. Patterson p. 193.
[20] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 221
[21] Sunningdale was where the failed power sharing experiment of 1974 was hatched.
[22] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 265.
[23] See op. cit. O'Connor p. 19.

utility of Sinn Fein's electoral role and strengthened the hand of those republicans who were suspicious of having to 'refine' their actions in keeping with Sinn Fein priorities, especially when Libyan shipments of weapons put the armed campaign on as sound a footing as it had ever been.

Perhaps one of the failings of the SDLP, and this has helped to sustain Adams' political strategy, has been that it has never really appealed to the working classes, but has been more associated with 'Castle Catholics' and the middle class. The failure to tackle social deprivation in places like West Belfast has left the door open for Sinn Fein to utilise a natural constituency of Catholic working class voters. A confidential SDLP survey was apparently carried out in West Belfast that found that white collar workers were three times more likely to have voted for the SDLP than for Sinn Fein and that the unemployed and those 'at subsistence levels' were twice as likely to have voted Sinn Fein.[25] Sinn Fein attracts few political idealogues but appeal to any group that bears economic grievance or feels socially excluded.[26] Father Denis Faul stated that the Church must speak for Catholics 'at the sharp end of injustice and sectarianism' – or lose souls to 'the Provos' by allowing Sinn Fein to consolidate an underclass vote.'[27]

The attitude of the Catholic Church and its alignment more with the SDLP than republicans might have been another factor that has militated against the utility of Sinn

[24] After democratisation in Spain in 1974 the Spanish group ETA were also concerned by the number of votes that were being cast for the moderate nationalist party, the PNV, by voters who might otherwise have voted for the group.
[25] See op. cit. O' Connor pp. 68 and 71. This is notwithstanding that some of its founders were deeply rooted in working class communities in West Belfast, such as Gerry Fitt and Paddy Devlin.
[26] Ibid. p. 61.
[27] Quoted in op. cit. O'Connor p. 298.

Fein as an electoral tool in a religious society. In her survey of Catholic attitudes O' Connor states that 'the perception that the Church's 'political point of view' includes an unwillingness to offend the state – as well as closeness to the SDLP – is widely shared'[28] and the 'repeated denunciation (by the Church) of the use of violence, and of apologists for violence, has made clear what the officially approved attitude is to Sinn Fein. Constant praise for the moderation and morality of the advocates of constitutional nationalism indicates where the Church's blessing lies.'[29]

It should also be noted that the SDLP has influenced republican thinking in other ways. During the New Ireland Forum discussions O'Connor detected a 'new language' from republicans where the period of transition to a united Ireland started to be defined in generations. While this change in attitude might have signalled the potential for some kind of peace process, it also seemed to entail a greater role for Sinn Fein. John Hume's role as persuader (from the late 1980s[30]) to Adams' that there was no merit in continuing the armed struggle was also a factor that would assist the development of Sinn Fein.[31] Hume was pivotal in bringing Adams around to understanding 'that progress could only be made by persuading the unionist community, who were the real opponents of Irish unity, of the need for change.'[32] In fact it could be argued that, as the leader of the respectable and constitutional party of nationalism, it was Hume himself who first

[28] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 282.
[29] Ibid. p. 291.
[30] In what became known as the Hume-Adams dialogue.
[31] See, for example, Bowcott, O., 'Catholic parties rule out new deal', The Guardian, April 25th 1993.
[32] Farren, S., 'Surviving turmoil and threat to play a pivotal role', Irish Times, August 20th 2000.

publicly conferred legitimacy on the IRA and Sinn Fein by pursuing his lengthy dialogue with Adams.[33]

## Sinn Fein's potential electorate

Another factor that has had a direct impact on the electoral performance of the IRA's political front, and therefore its utility as an electoral tool, has been the size of Sinn Fein's potential electorate. What is particularly interesting is that much of Sinn Fein's core support appears to come from voters who might have had *any type of grievance.*[34] The party has been able to harness support from people who have had grievances that may be socially or economically related rather than politically motivated.

This would tend to suggest that social and economic deprivation has enhanced the electoral performance of the IRA's political front. Richard Rose, however, refutes the suggestion that such deprivation is related to the constitutional issue in the Northern Ireland context. Loss of economic being, he argued in *Governing Without Consensus*, hadn't meant a challenge to the London regime in the past.[35] He continued: 'the politician's theory that Catholic allegiance can be bought with economic benefits is refuted by the evidence.'[36] Cavanaugh also argues that political violence in N. Ireland has

[33] See, for example, Pyle, F., 'Why critics have sought to link SDLP and IRA', Irish Times, February 21st, 1989.
[34] See, for example, op. cit. O'Connor p. 61.
[35] Op. cit. Rose p. 71.
[36] Ibid. p. 300.

not been related to economic deprivation, thus dismissing 'deprivation theory' or 'equity theory'.[37] The conflict, she argued, has been waged on nationalist not class divisions.

Wichert nevertheless argued that there is a clear link between high unemployment and social deprivation and communal violence or clashes with state forces in areas such as West Belfast.[38] Moxon-Browne has stated that 'in essence PIRA represents the 'cutting edge' of a movement which finds roots in the frustration of relative deprivation experienced by a section of the Catholic community in N. Ireland.'[39] Coupled with this is the reputation that Sinn Fein has managed to establish for itself as the hardest working party 'on the ground' not only in terms of canvassing votes but also through its engagement with community politics and its resolution of local issues and grievances. Thus Sinn Fein's activity in this area, coupled with the SDLP's apparent lack of interest in deprived areas, has meant that the IRA's political front has found natural allies and supporters through the unemployed, those with poor housing, those poorly educated, and those who feel marginalised by a society they feel is unjust, and this has therefore increased its utility as an electoral tool. None of these attributes necessarily mean these people vote for Sinn Fein to secure a united Ireland.[40] Lennon makes the additional point that the deprived are unemployed and bored and are more likely to commit crime hence it is not surprising that there is a conflict between deprived people and the police.[41] This provides another reason for these people to become the natural allies of Sinn Fein (who

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[37] Cavanaugh, K., 'Interpretations Of Political Violence In Ethnically Divided Societies', Terrorism And Political Violence, Vol. 9, Autumn 1997, No. 3, p. 40.
[38] Wichert, S., Northern Ireland Since 1945, Longman, London and New York, 1991, pp. 184-5.
[39] Moxon-Browne, E., 'The Water and the Fish: Public Opinion and the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland', Wilkinson, P. (ed.), British Perspectives On Terrorism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1981, p. 69.
[40] See, for example, op. cit. O'Connor p. 70.
[41] Op. cit. Lennon p. 137.

have withheld support from the 'illegitimate' police force), especially if the police are often perceived as protecting the better off.[42]

Thus, while it may not necessarily be the case that economic benefits enhance the political allegiance of Catholics to the state (Rose pointed out that the state could not buy allegiance with such benefits) they might well moderate the expression of this lack of allegiance and thus enhance the vote of the moderate nationalist party at the expense of Sinn Fein. In other words while antipathy to the state may remain, and Rose makes the point that there was no consistent tendency for upward or downwardly mobile Catholics to have their views toward the Constitution altered by mobility,[43] the methods of showing it will have been moderated.

The significance of all this is that if Sinn Fein was aware that much of its electorate consisted of all types of disaffected groups then its calls in recent years and under the new political dispensation to regenerate socially and economically deprived areas would appear to have risked losing these people their cause of disaffection and possibly therefore their votes. The chances of upward mobility would have been enhanced and thus more SDLP supporting Castle Catholics would have been created. Thus, would these calls to address such deprivation in socially disadvantaged Catholic districts not have reduced the utility of the political front as an electoral tool?

[42] Ibid.
[43] Op. cit. Rose p. 342.

Whether or not this has or would have been the case the issue has been superceded by a more significant factor. The legitimisation of the IRA and Sinn Fein by the governments of the UK, Irish Republic and the US and the resulting reputation that the party has gained as the 'tough lawyer'[44] for Catholics (as opposed to the 'weak lawyer', the SDLP) has seen the party's fortunes improve considerably and its potential electorate expand through the peace process.

Thus, the type of state response has increased the appeal of Sinn Fein, expanded its support base and has therefore increased the utility of the political front as an electoral tool and as a result it has now managed to eat into the SDLP's constituency with its so-called 'non-territorial nationalism.' State response has therefore helped to create new opportunities as far as the potential electorate for the IRA's political front is concerned and therefore given it greater utility.

## The Hunger Strikes

Whenever one attempts to generate hypotheses or contribute to theory formulation one shouldn't underestimate the impact of unforeseen events. This is particularly true of the IRA case in this thesis. One such event that could not be anticipated was 'the fluke of Independent (Unity) MP Frank Maguire's death during the surge of nationalist sympathy for the prison hunger strikers of 1981.'[45] Not only did this provide an opening for Sands but it was at a time when the Catholic population appeared to be radicalised by the

[44] A term used by Aughey, A., (interview) to describe Sinn Fein's stance in the peace process negotiations.
[45] Op. cit. O'Connor p. 76.

strikes. Thus, if there was one episode that was fundamental with regard to the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein as a political front then it was the hunger strikes and Bobby Sands' election victory. The events of 1981 more than anything conquered the fear amongst republicans of using the ballot box and represented a turning point as far as Sinn Fein's role was concerned.

The crucial thing to understand is that while in the longer term this greater utilisation of Sinn Fein may indeed have ultimately represented moderation on the part of the movement, at the time its expanded role was to go hand in hand with the armed struggle. It was still clearly not a substitute or an alternative to a strategy of violence, but rather an adjunct to it. Sands' success was seen by the IRA as a mandate for the armed struggle and a confidence booster to not just continue with the 'war' but to pursue it with even more determination.[46] Not only did it reinforce the justification for violence and attract droves of new recruits to the cause but it also galvanised and motivated republicans to expand the so called 'Long war' strategy that Adams had advocated in the late 1970s. Sinn Fein's policy also became harder line in the light of the hunger strikes. Wichert notes that up to 1980 Sinn Fein demanded phased withdrawal of the British, but changed this to immediate withdrawal.[47]

[46] Noraid was said to have doubled its income from contributors during the hunger strikes. (Ball, I., 'IRA Cash from U.S. Doubled', Daily Telegraph, October 13th 1981).
[47] Op. cit Wichert p. 186.

## The International Environment

### The United States

As the world has become more globalised internal conflict and sub-state insurgencies rarely come without an international dimension. Washington's interest in the Northern Ireland conflict is borne of a burgeoning Irish-American diaspora that emanated from the two great emigration drives after the Irish famine and the defeat of the anti-treatyites after the Irish Civil War, and so Irish-Americans have, like the South of Ireland, a historical sympathy with the cause of Irish republicanism. This has given Sinn Fein great utility as a propaganda machine because North America has been seen by the party as 'a key battleground in the propaganda war with Britain'[48] [49] and it has therefore organised numerous 'propaganda tours' there.[50]

Sinn Fein's role as the political voice of the IRA has also been transmitted through the media. A good example of this has been the 'Gerry Adams column' in the Irish Voice, an Irish-America paper, through which the Sinn Fein leader has been able to channel the IRA's view of events, criticizing the 'imperialist' British, and lauding republican 'martyrs'.[51] The column was particularly useful for republicans as a way of explaining to the American audience the reasons, for example, behind the breakdown of the IRA's

[48] Doyle, L., 'Sinn Fein pins hopes on Noraid for new blood', The Independent, January 23rd 1989.
[49] Also see Doyle, L., 'Words, not weapons, are the war strategy in the US', The Independent, September 11th 1989.
[50] See, for example, Bishop, P., 'Propaganda tour plan by Sinn Fein', The Observer, October 24th 1982.
[51] These articles were subsequently serialised in a book (Adams, G., An Irish Voice, The Quest for Peace, Mount Eagle, Dingle, County Derry, 1997). See, for example, pp. 141, 148, 160.

ceasefire in February 1996 and how (alleged) British government obduracy and stalling caused it[52], and how the 'international media gathered to see Sinn Fein [subsequently] being refused entry to the 'all-party talks'' in June[53], and how 'being stopped at British-staffed checkpoints [was] a fact of life for Nationalists in Northern Ireland'[54]

The United States has been a potent source of funds and arms with which to sustain the struggle at home. Such assistance, allegedly through groups like Noraid (Northern Irish Aid), has helped to keep the IRA armed[55] and mobilised and therefore helped to militate against the use of a political front as a sign of moderation. Gun running operations have also been a common feature of Irish-American support for the armed struggle.[56] Indeed, according to Bishop and Mallie, 'by 1981, forty-seven per cent of the weapons recovered by the police and Army since the troubles started were of American manufacture.'[57] Thus 'Irish-American republicans made an extremely important contribution to the IRA'.[58] Such support, both in terms of funding and arms, helped the IRA pursue its armed struggle and would have lessened the likelihood that its political front would have been used as a sign of moderation.

Sinn Fein's propaganda function both at home and in the US and the support that this has helped to generate for the Irish republican cause has meant that the political front has also been a useful fundraising tool. Although there are a plethora of republican fundraising

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[52] Ibid. p. 201.
[53] Ibid. p. 218.
[54] Ibid. p. 240.
[55] Nicholson-Lord, D., 'Noraid men implicated in $5m arms deals', The Times, February 23rd 1982.
[56] See Wilson, A., Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995, Blackstaff, Belfast 1995, pp. 290-1.
[57] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 301.
[58] See op. cit. Wilson p. 292.

organisations one shouldn't forget the utility of Sinn Fein in this regard. It has been argued in this thesis that Sinn Fein's primary role has been to develop popular support for the struggle and one positive offshoot of this has been greater income from fundraising at home and abroad, and particularly the United States. Sinn Fein spokesmen have addressed republican support groups in the US with the aim of raising money for the IRA.[59] Beyond these 'propaganda tours' the political front has also been engaged in organising collections at functions in pubs and clubs.[60]

Apart from its important propaganda role in mobilising greater domestic and international support, the role of the political front as the fundraiser for IRA resources and activities should not be overstated. The IRA have used a variety of other effective means of raising funds, including protection rackets, illegal taxi firms, building site frauds, illegal drinking clubs, kidnapping for ransom, bank robberies, smuggling and counterfeiting. [61] It has also benefited from Noraid's fundraising activities.

Sinn Fein has, however, been able to raise substantial sums for its own party finances. Initially, in the 1980s, there was a certain degree of resentment that IRA funds should go towards Adams' political strategy.[62] Since then Sinn Fein has become self-sustaining through its fundraising activity and in fact has become the richest party in Northern

[59] See, for example, 'Sinn Fein activist to be deported from US', The Independent, November 16th 1989.
[60] See Horgan, J., and Taylor, M., 'Playing the 'Green Card' – Financing the Provisional IRA: Part 1', Terrorism and Political Violence, Summer 1999, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 35 (footnote 36).
[61] See two excellent articles on IRA fundraising: Horgan and Taylor's 'Playing the 'Green Card' – Financing the Provisional IRA: Part 1' (ibid.) and James Adams' 'The Financing of Terror' (op. cit.). See also 'Rackets and business keep millions coming in', The Sunday Times, August 7th 1988, and Cusack, J., and Keogh, E., 'Gang used Garda uniforms in cigarettes raid', The Irish Times, December 5th 2001.
[62] See, for example, Clarke, L., Broadening the Battlefield, The H Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Fein, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1987, p. 230.

Ireland. This financial footing on its own has increased the utility of the political front as an electoral and propaganda machine. In the United States 'Friends of Sinn Fein' has been funding the party since 1995 and by the end of 2002 it was said to have raised nearly 5.5 million dollars[63] with Adams able to draw a thousand guests at $500 dollar a head fundraising dinners[64]. Friends of Sinn Fein apparently 'agreed to a deal with the Department of Justice in Washington, which meant that every dollar raised and spent in Ireland had to be accounted for and the books audited by an accountant nominated by the federal government'[65] which in turn meant that none of the money raised would be allowed to fund the IRA. The party also currently receives the highest amount of money in donations in comparison with any other political party on the island of Ireland.[66]

It is not clear how much, if any, of this money has contributed to the sustenance of the IRA but the very fact that Sinn Fein is the richest party on the island of Ireland has enhanced its utility as a fighting electoral machine considerably. As such, in this respect the popular support and international environment variables have been particularly important in increasing the utility of Sinn Fein as an electoral tool.

The US was to have a very different kind of impact on the utility of Sinn Fein when, much to the ire of the British government, in 1994 President Clinton granted Gerry Adams a 48 hour visa. In fact, leading US politicians had made an impact since the early

[63] Ray O'Hanlon, 'Adams to meet Haass, fundraise', The Irish Echo online, Newshound, website: http://www.nuzhound.com , November 6-12 2002.
[64] Breen, S., 'Victim's mother to picket SF fund-raiser in NY', Irish Times, November 4th 2000.
[65] Moloney, E., A Secret History of the IRA, Penguin, London, 2002, p. 460.
[66] Parties in the Irish Republic are not required to register donations under 4000 pounds but those over that amount give a total Sinn Fein figure of approximately 300,000 pounds in 2001 (from an overall total

1970s. In 1971, for example, Senator Edward Kennedy had called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the province, and was therefore accused of giving encouragement to the IRA.[67] Though he later moderated his position in support of constitutional nationalism, the so-called 'Four Horsemen' of Irish-American politics (of which he was a member [68]) were to have a significant bearing on US policy on Northern Ireland. Although they denounced IRA violence they also criticised British government policy. In 1979 they succeeded in getting the State Department to suspend the sale of handguns to the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary)[69], much to the ire of the British government. The group then formed Friends of Ireland which 'contained some of the most powerful politicians in America'.[70] The 'Friends' supported the New Ireland Forum and were instrumental behind the US pressure that helped to bring a more conciliatory Margaret Thatcher in the negotiations leading up to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.[71]

Those in the US that lobbied for a visa to be granted to Adams argued that it 'would strengthen moderates within the republican movement' and 'that further gains could be achieved if violence was ended.'[72] Subsequent US persuasion was one of the factors behind the IRA's ceasefire in August 1994 and this was followed in September by the granting of an unrestricted visa to Adams, further steps that enhanced the utility of the

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donated to all parties of approximately 750,000) compared to approximately 185,000 in 2000 (see 'Sinn Fein outscores FF in donation league', The Irish Times, April 17th 2002).

[67] Op. cit. Wilson p. 286.

[68] The other three members were Senator Daniel Moynihan, the Speaker Tip O'Neill and Hugh Carey (Governor of New York).

[69] See Bew, P., and Gillespie, G., Northern Ireland, A Chronology Of The Troubles, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, p. 136.

[70] Op. cit. Wilson p. 287.

[71] Ibid. p. 287. This is not to ignore the fact in this paragraph that the US government was 'generally responsive to British requests for action against the Irish-American republican network' through undermining Noraid funding, breaking up gunrunning operations and maintaining (up to the 1990s) a 'highly restrictive' visa policy against Sinn Fein (op. cit. Wilson p. 292.).

IRA's political front. Ever since the Sinn Fein leader has been seen as something of a world statesman by many Irish-Americans. This and the party's access to the very top of the hierarchy of the world's only superpower were to raise the profile of Sinn Fein to new heights. Indeed, the sponsorship of Sinn Fein by the United States, the Irish Republic and the UK has meant that republican aspirations, and even *the means* it used, have been given a degree of legitimacy. In fact, to reiterate, the legitimisation of extremism has meant that, at the time of writing, it is increasingly Sinn Fein and not the SDLP who the Catholic electorate look to play hardball when it comes to winning concessions for the nationalist community as well as Catholics as a whole, and this has greatly enhanced Sinn Fein's role as an electoral tool.

**Libya And International Support**

This thesis has suggested that a continued belief in the utility of violence alone as a strategy militates against the greater utilisation of a political front as a sign of moderation. There are a number of components to the perceived success in the use of violence. One of these is a ready supply of arms. The IRA is known to have had a number of international links that have helped it to procure arms.[73] The international strategic environment of the 1980s – specifically the hostile relations between the UK and Libya[74] – led to Gadaffi supplying substantial arms shipments to the IRA.

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[72] Ibid. p. 295.

[73] See, for example, 'Provo arms links with Palestine guerrillas', Sunday Times, February 12th 1978. There have even been reports of an IRA training camp on the edge of the Sahara Desert (see Linscott, G., 'Sahara base for IRA – Banks', The Guardian, March 25th 1977).

Following the Second World War Libya was granted independence after a long history of colonial rule. Strong 'Western' influence, however, remained as the British, Americans and French 'maintained large military bases to protect their political and economic interests in the region, especially vast oil fields'.[75] While the ruling Idris family reaped the rewards of the oil wealth there was very little benefit for the many that lived in poverty. Frustration over this and the wave of Arab nationalism that was sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East at the time prompted Sadi Gadaffi to overthrow the Idris family.[76]

Like the IRA, therefore, Gadaffi had a hatred for the 'colonialist' British and 'he let it be known that it [Libya] was ready and able to assist revolutionary movements willing to foment trouble for the old imperial powers that had once ruled the Arab Middle East'.[77] After making contact with the regime, the IRA managed to secure agreement from Tripoli to supply it with arms, after which shipments were successfully despatched in the early 1970s.[78] By the mid 1970s, however, the Libyan leader, having been impressed by the loyalist Ulster Workers' Council strike, had become 'apprised of the complexities of the Ulster situation' and had lost interest.[79]

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[74] Not least due to the murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher by a gunman firing from the Libyan Embassy in London.
[75] Moloney, E., A Secret History of the IRA, Penguin, 2002, p. 8.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid. p. 9. It wasn't just the Middle East that viewed the former colonists in this way. The Japanese Red Army terrorist group was also referred to as the Ant-Imperialist International Brigade.
[78] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 305. It was from this time that IRA members received training exercises in Libya (see, for example, McDonald, H., 'IRA's top army agent slips out of Ulster', http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , May 11th 2003, and Jacinto, L., 'Peddling Terror', http://more.abcnews.go.com/sections/world/GoodMorningAmerica/ireland030811.html , August 11th 2003).
[79] Ibid. p. 306.

Relations between the United Kingdom and Libya were to deteriorate further in the 1980s. This culminated in the murder of PC Yvonne Fletcher by a gunman firing from the Libyan Embassy in London, after which Libyan diplomats were expelled from the country. The Libyan 'Voice of the Arab Homeland' stated that

> 'the People's committees will form an alliance with the secret IRA in view of the fact that it champions the cause of liberating Ireland and liberating the Irish nation from the tyranny of British colonialism ... if Britain tries to use any means to pressurize and oppress Libyan Arabs the revolutionary committees will enable the IRA to do whatever it wishes in Britain and to retaliate twice as strongly'.[80]

Gadaffi himself apparently referred to the IRA leaders as 'noble strugglers'.[81] Subsequently, two more shipment of arms made it through in 1985 and a further two were successfully dispatched after the retaliatory bombing by the United States, Britain's

[80] Cited in O'Brien, B., The Long War, The IRA And Sinn Fein, O'Brien Press, Dublin, 1995, p. 138.
[81] Ibid. It could be argued that the end of the Cold War is another factor in the international environment that has had an impact not just on the 'Troubles' but also on the utility of political fronts. By taking the wind out of revolutionary movements it has arguably made possible the emergence of a number of peace processes and therefore the greater utility of political fronts (that therefore represented moderation towards the use of violence) as negotiating vehicles. Michael Cox, for example, argued that the end of the Cold War 'made it far more difficult for the IRA to continue with its military campaign ... because in the post-cold era its campaign of violence could no longer be so readily justified.' He cited Sinn Fein's Mitchel McLaughlin who said that 'the end of the Cold War and its effects on the strategic and the regional interests of the West made it possible for a number of peace processes [including the one in Ireland] to emerge.' Cox suggested that 'as radicalism around the world began to ebb in the 1990s, this had a marked influence on a number of key figures in the Republican movement' and they 'started to lose their various points of ideological and political reference around the world.' Cox, M., 'Northern Ireland: The War that came in from the Cold', Irish Studies In International Affairs, Vol. 9, 1998, pp. 73-84. The point has also been made that Clinton's decision to grant Adams a visa against British wishes reflected the dimunition of the value of the 'special relationship' between the two countries in the post Cold War environment. (Wilson, A., Irish America and the Ulster Conflict 1968-1995, Blackstaff, Belfast 1995, pp. 293-4).

closest ally, of Tripoli in April 1986.[82] One shipment that did not make it through, however, was the Eksund which was seized off the French coast with 150 tons of arms and ammunition on board. Despite this success the failure to detect the other shipments represented a serious intelligence failure. In all approximately 150 tons were successfully delivered off the Wicklow coast.[83] At this time, therefore, it appeared that the IRA was perfectly adequately equipped to continue the 'war' against the British state and according to some 'led the Army Council to believe that the IRA could score a significant military breakthrough'.[84] This would have militated against the use of a political front as a sign of moderation or even as part of dual-track strategy as the tensions within the republican movement over Enniskillen, for example, were to show.

## The Loyalists

This thesis argues that, in the cases of the loyalist groups, it is the domestic external environment that has had *the most fundamental impact* of all the variables assessed. Unionist culture and traditions, the notion of the division of labour within unionism, and the fact that the UDA and the UVF are pro-state groups have all placed inhibitions on the

[82] The attack on Tripoli was said to be the result of the Reagan administration's belief that Libya was behind the bombing of a Berlin disco that killed two US servicemen in 1986 (see website: http://www.msnbc.com/news/524870.asp ).
[83] Holland, J., Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999, p. 194. For a catalogue of those shipments of arms intercepted by the authorities see 'Weapons that were intercepted', Irish Times, June 27th 2000.
[84] Holland, J., Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999, p. 195.

strategies of these organisations, that have in turn militated against the utility of their political fronts.

## The Collectivist Unionist Culture

Unionism has traditionally been seen as a monolithic entity.[85] Its collectivist tradition finds its roots in the process of industrialisation and a common bond against the Catholic South and Irish nationalists in the province. Bastions of the North's manufacturing industry, such as the Harland and Wolff shipyards, have comprised almost exclusively of Protestant unionists. Ever since the formation of the province of Northern Ireland in 1922 the notion of the 'Protestant ascendancy' bonded all those of that religion together and unionism spoke with one voice (in theory at least). The spokesmen were Unionist politicians while their position and that of unionism were protected by the state's largely Protestant security forces - the RUC and the B Specials. It was a unionist state for the Protestant people and therefore it was Protestant unionist law that had to be obeyed. This meant that the Northern Irish administration was inherently sectarian in nature against the minority Catholic population that it did not trust and that it felt would undermine the state if given the chance. It therefore followed that the obligation to obey the law and to uphold the state was itself sectarian practice - thus the continuing unionist reference to 'the majority of law abiding citizens' as a euphemism for the Protestant population as opposed to those that sought to undermine the state.

[85] Dingley, J., interview.

The sectarian nature of 'Protestant law' was perhaps unwittingly revealed by a recent comment by David Burnside (Ulster Unionist Party MP for South Antrim) in relation to the expense of the Bloody Sunday inquiry: 'Public inquiries don't make people any better. Bloody Sunday has just wound up the republican population, made the lawyers rich, and *the law-abiding people* in Northern Ireland are just disgusted with all this money being spent.'[86] (italics added) The false, and perhaps sectarian, assumption here is that the only law abiding people in Northern Ireland are Protestants (or otherwise that law abiding Catholics do not support the inquiry which is also clearly not true).

It was this inherent respect for (unionist) law and order that meant that 'respectable' politicians and the 'law abiding majority' were sure to keep their distance from the Protestant paramilitaries when they emerged in the 1960s and 70s, and this meant that any potential support for their political fronts was always going to be minimal. With a history of at best latent antagonism against Stormont and the British state the relationship of most Catholics with the IRA was by contrast more ambivalent, exemplified at the ballot box with some impressive showings for Sinn Fein, particularly since the hunger strikes of 1981. In summary, the law abiding nature of the unionist population, even if it was to uphold a partial state, meant that it was always going to find it more difficult to support any political front that might be linked to an illegal terrorist group.

[86] Robins, J., 'Lawyers in the line of fire', The Independent, 30 July 2002.

## The Division of Labour

When the UVF and the UDA did emerge, however, some unionist politicians saw the value in using loyalist muscle for political leverage. Even when the Protestant working classes became aware of this, and some spokesmen sought to give them representation through the PUP and the UDP, the 'law abiding' Protestant population, working classes included, instinctively believed that politicians did the politics while the paramilitaries role was 'military'. In other words a natural extension of the 'law abiding' nature of unionism was that, if there had to be loyalist paramilitaries, then there should at least be a division of labour. If loyalist terrorists were an unfortunate necessity in responding to violent republicanism they certainly were not going to be allowed to contaminate established political unionism.

While the law abiding nature of unionist culture meant that there was no place for paramilitaries engaging in political projects, it also inevitably meant that the political endeavours that were embarked upon would be undermined by loyalist violence. For example when Tommy Herron, leader of the UDA in East Belfast and vice chairman, 'stood as a Vanguard unionist for the 1973 Assembly he got fewer votes than the UDA had members in the area.'[87] Malachi O'Doherty, a Belfast journalist, stated that 'those who support loyalist organisations mostly give their votes to other parties which have a limited tolerance of old gunmen and offer no promotion to them.'[88] There has, then, been an in-built problem for the loyalist groups to achieve respectability. Arthur Aughey

[87] Bruce, S., 'Paramilitaries, Peace, and Politics: Ulster Loyalists and the 1994 Truce' in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 18, p. 199.

suggested that John McMichael looked upon his involvement with the anti Anglo-Irish agreement Ulster Clubs as a way of countering this problem by attaching himself and the UDA to a popular cause alongside 'respectable' politicians.[89]

## Pro-State Terrorism

As loyalism is pro-state, there have been plenty of political alternatives to loyalist political fronts, through the plethora of unionist parties. As a Special Branch source put it:

> 'As pro-state terrorists the loyalists have always struggled to attract individuals with serious political potential. Such talent would always inevitably realise its potential with the mainstream unionist parties'[90]

As a result, 'while the Republican Movement attracts talent the loyalist movement is led by men with muscle-bound vocal chords.'[91]

Not only have loyalists faced the problem of lack of political talent in a competitive field but being pro-state has reduced the utility of political fronts in other ways. While Sinn Fein was used as a propaganda tool to justify their cause and highlight flaws in government policy, loyalists had no need of this because unionists *were the state* and

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[88] O' Doherty, M., 'Man on a mission but future is not so bright', Belfast Telegraph, 30th July 2002.
[89] Aughey, A., interview. It was, argues Aughey, an attempt by McMichael to push his own ambitions and UDA policy beyond Belfast. The Ulster Clubs were to be the front for the extension of loyalist politics.
[90] Special Branch source, interview.

even after the imposition of Direct Rule there were still a plethora of unionist parties to choose from. Perhaps most significantly, whereas there was no radical nationalist alternative to Sinn Fein, the DUP has certainly represented hardline unionism and so the political space was simply not there for loyalist political fronts. Bruce argued in 1992:

> 'The logic ... is that there was and is no obvious political opening for the loyalist paramilitaries. Precisely because they are loyalists there is no possibility of acquiring a position analogous to that of Sinn Fein. When one is fighting to preserve the state from those who would destroy it and to maintain the status quo, one can complain about this or that element of the British government's policies, but one cannot present a radical alternative.'[92]

It was precisely because of this lack of political space, and the desire to free themselves from the division of labour ethos, that the loyalist political fronts had to be innovative. They had to be different to try and appeal to the electorate by presenting fresh ideas compared to the 'stick in the mud' policies of unionist parties that had 'let them down'. These new ideas manifested themselves in attempts to bring new approaches to somehow ultimately ending the conflict and so this thesis argues that unlike republicans, the loyalist political fronts did generally represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence. There was neither the level of sophistication to utilise political fronts as tactical devices (except when they have been used to detract attention away from criminal exploits), nor was it practicable because, while Sinn Fein was used from the late 1970s to establish

[91] O' Doherty, M., 'Man on a mission but future is not so bright', Belfast Telegraph, 30th July 2002.

alternative social structures to those of the state, loyalist groups supported those that already existed. This provides a clear example of how the utility of loyalist political fronts (especially as a tactic) is limited compared with their anti-state counterparts.

These 'innovative' ideas were, however, an affront to traditional unionism. Speaking of Barr's proposals for an independent Northern Ireland Bruce noted:

> ' ... that it was an innovation at all meant that it was suspect. The whole credo of unionism is a journey from Eden to hell. Things were once very good when all of Ireland was British. Then they were good because Ulster was British. Any future is hardly likely to be better than the past and is almost certain to be worse. The most successful unionist politicians are those whose manner and style, as well as politics, are most obviously tied to the past. Even when it is presented as the last chance to hold on to the present, innovation is suspect because it is an admission that something must be given up.'[93]

Thus, there has always been something of a dilemma for the loyalist groups and their political prospects. In an attempt to break into the unionist electorate they had to present an alternative to the stale old unionism yet anything innovative was treated with suspicion as a further potential dilution of the Britishness of the province. As Bruce noted working class Protestants who are not evangelicals grow up in a world of late 17th century symbols, such as the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the Battle of the

[92] Bruce, S., The Red Hand, Protestant Paramilitaries In Northern Ireland, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 243-4.

Boyne, stating that 'ideas and images that do not draw on that tradition will have an uphill struggle to acceptance.'[94]

The ironies of being a pro-state terrorist were not lost on Gusty Spence as he addressed a republican:

> ''Listen,' I said, 'you have to understand – you entered into this situation and you knew what you were on about, you knew exactly what you wanted to achieve; I didn't. I hadn't got a clue and yet I had all these qualifications: I was a Prod, a member of the British army, I was in the Orange and the Black, and I voted Unionist and I did all these things. Whenever you people are put in here it's a 'foreign' government puts you in here. But *my* government put me in here.'[95]

One of the objectives of IRA violence was to bomb their way to the negotiating table. Spence stated that 'violence had worked for the IRA who were engaged in talks with government agents as part of the political process. The UVF took a conscious decision to give the British Government a message that if Republican violence could get them to the conference table, then the UVF could commit more violence than the IRA.' [96] But, as Spence was well aware, the pro-state group had its limitations – if loyalists tried to bomb their way to the negotiating table what could talks with the British government achieve? Talks to keep things as they were? In any case unionism had so many representatives to

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[93] Ibid. p. 243.
[94] Ibid. p. 235.
[95] Spence, G., quoted in Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997, p. 14.

do this, who incidentally would use the threat of loyalist turmoil as a bargaining tool themselves. So what was the point of 'political' representatives of the UVF and the UDA? The very fact that unionist politicians were able to use loyalist disenchantment undermined the potential utility of loyalist political fronts as a means for the British government to communicate with the UDA or the UVF without having to deal with the stigma of talking to terrorists.

This leads on to another fundamental problem for the two loyalist groups in the domestic external environment. Their violence to a large extent has been a response to republican terrorism.[97] As Aughey and McIlheny argued 'what distinguished militant Protestant activity was its negative and reactive character. In 'military' terms tit-for-tat killings followed the level of IRA violence.'[98] Therefore loyalist strategy has largely been determined by IRA strategy. If the IRA stepped up its campaign then so would the UDA and UVF. This in turn would have militated against the use of a political front (whereas it may not have done on the republican side who could use Sinn Fein as a tactical device) because the 'law abiding' nature of unionism would have meant that the utility of paramilitaries engaging in politics would have been even more limited. Thus, because the loyalist political fronts represented moderation and 'accommodation', if the IRA stepped up its campaign of violence then any loyalist response would automatically undermine the role of these fronts. The utility of the loyalist political fronts have therefore often been dependent on republican strategy. This was borne out in May 2002 when David Ervine

[96] Ibid.
[97] This was acknowledged by the UDA (Bowcott, O., 'Presbyterians hold meeting with UDA', The Guardian, March 2nd 1992).

warned that continuing IRA activity meant that 'the options for [his] party [were] seriously narrowed'.[99]

Garland summed up the problems for the loyalist groups:

> 'The reality ... was that the Unionist political establishment – coupled with the Provisional IRA's total disregard for the increasing polarisation its relentless onslaught was engendering – had succeeded in neutralising progressive thinking within Loyalist ranks, and for most of the 1980s any 'new thinking' was forced to remain behind the scenes, until another opportunity might arise when the two communities in Northern Ireland could again be urged to seek an honest accommodation with each other.'[100]

Feuding *between* loyalist groups has also put pressure on the utility of their political fronts. Less centralised and disciplined than the IRA, the UDA and the LVF, in particular, have been prone to feuding. The LVF's potential to draw the UVF back to violence in a feud in 2000 that killed seven threatened to undermine the role of the Progressive Unionist Party.[101]

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[98] Aughey and McIlheny, 'The Ulster Defence Association: Paramilitaries and Politics', in Wilkinson, P., (ed.), Terrorism: British Perspectives, Dartmouth Publishing, Aldershot, 1993, p.35.
[99] Ervine, D., 'Provos made the crap', Newshound, website: http://www.nuzhound.co.uk , May 7th 2002.
[100] Garland, R., Seeking a political Accommodation, The Ulster Volunteer Force: Negotiating History, Shankhill Community Publication, 1997 p. 37.

## The UVF and the UDA

Despite all of these fundamental problems for any political initiative from the UDA and the UVF, the polarisation of the early 1970s in any case meant that there was no call for a political front. The sense of impending crisis and potential republican insurrection meant that on the loyalist side, too, politics was off the agenda. From August 1969 'both communities were in the grip of a mounting paranoia about the other's intentions. Catholics were convinced that they were about to become the victims of a Protestant pogrom; Protestants that they were on the eve of a republican insurrection.'[102]

An additional reason for this was that loyalism already appeared to have a political voice. To some degree they saw themselves as being represented by hardline unionists. Men like Ian Paisley and William Craig were perceived as giving the political representation to the 'courageous defence' of loyalists on the ground. In the first instance, then, the origins of the loyalist political fronts can be found in the change of the relationship between loyalism and 'respectable' unionism. It was the awareness amongst members of the loyalist community that they were being used or ignored whenever it suited unionism that prompted some to seek adequate political representation for working class loyalism. Writing of 1974 the Shankhill Bulletin stated:

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[101] See McAuley, J., and Hislop, S., ' 'Many roads forward': Politics and Ideology within the Progressive Unionist Party', Etudes Irlandaises, Spring 2000, pp. 187-8.
[102] Op. cit. Bishop and Mallie p. 103.

'the loyalist community has been brainwashed for years. We are supposed to be the privileged class yet we live in atrocious conditions, houses with no baths, run-down estates, high unemployment, few social amenities and whole communities which are dying because of the planners and government policies. Yet for years people have continued to vote for politicians who created and allowed these conditions to exist.'[103]

So deeply ingrained, however, was the division of labour within unionist culture that even members of the UDA and UVF voted for the 'respectable' political parties and this has been a constant disincentive against the establishment of political fronts. Thus while loyalists were thinking twice about being used as the 'muscle' for politicians, as they had been in the 1974 UWC strike, they continued to vote for them. This was evident in the electoral failures of the UDA's NUPRG[104] and meant that future such projects were going to be less likely. Moreover, again on the UDA, Bruce noted that these 'are the very people with the worst record of turning out to vote, especially when it is an absolute certainty that someone dressed in a Union Jack is going to win.'[105] All of these factors may have played a part in John McMichael's disastrous poll result in a February 1982 by-election in which he polled just 576 votes.

As if there wasn't enough that hindered loyalist exploits into politics, mainstream unionists labeled the would be politicians of the UVF as communists. As Garland wrote

[103] McAuley, J., 'Cuchullain and an RPG-7: the ideology and politics of the Ulster Defence Association', in Hughes, E., Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1991, p. 52.
[104] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 240.
[105] Ibid. p. 241.

'in the early 1970s unionist politicians regularly accused UVF and UDA spokesmen of being communists.'[106] This was underpinned by an apparent dirty tricks campaign from the British army (see chapter 8).

## THE UDA

As far as both the loyalist groups are concerned it was the domestic external environment that was the most crucial factor underpinning the use (or not) of political fronts. In the case of the UDA the turning point in the relationship with unionist politicians which in turn led to the formation of the NUPRG was the failure of the 1977 strike that Paisley had called for. As McAuley stated:

> 'The Ulster Defence Association came into being as an expression of the mistrust of Ulster working people with Unionist politics. The UDA is a working people's organisation, the only one of its kind in Ulster. While its main concern has been for the maintenance of an armed body of citizens, the UDA has found itself in the position of exploring its political potential, because of the increasingly obvious weakness of Unionist politics ...under this momentum the UDA entered the field of constitutional politics.'[107]

[106] Bruce, S., 'Paramilitaries, Peace, and Politics: Ulster Loyalists and the 1994 Truce' in Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 18, p. 200.
[107] Ulster quoted in op. cit. McAuley pp. 54-5.

Peter Taylor also emphasises the significance of the failure of the strike, arguing that it heralded the break between Paisley and the UDA who apparently 'were no longer prepared ... to be used by him'[108]. Andy Tyrie and John McMichael 'set up a political think tank – the New Ulster Political Research Group – to work out the organization's own policy as its members no longer had any faith in mainstream loyalist politicians.'[109] The remit of Glen Barr, Harry Chicken, Bill Snoddy and Tucker Lyttle 'was to produce a coherent political direction for the UDA.'[110]

Events in the domestic external environment had provided a catalyst for the change in the nature of this relationship. The success of the UDA in the Ulster Workers Council strike that brought down the Sunningdale project had led some loyalists to believe that the UDA could play a more political role. Bruce remarked that 'some of the impetus [for McMichael's Common Sense document] undoubtedly came from a belief that, as in 1974, the apparent impotence of the major parties left a vacuum in which the UDA could again find an important role itself.'[111] Certainly, a view was developing that loyalists could think more politically for themselves instead of depending on unionist politicians to do this for them.

The document was always going to face stiff resistance from the 'law abiding' community. However innovative or refreshing, the fact that it came from a paramilitary group was enough for it to be dismissed. Moreover, if proposals were going to be any

[108] Taylor, P., Loyalists, Bloomsbury, London, 1999, p. 162.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Op. cit. Bruce, The Red Hand p. 231.
[111] Ibid. p.239.

different from the ideas of the plethora of other unionist political representatives then they had to show more innovation. This manifested itself in the attempt by Barr and others to promote the idea of independence. Yet being innovative, as Bruce stated, was in itself dubious to the vast bulk of the unionist population. As Aughey argued above (in chapter 4), how can one equate independence with loyalty?

Andrew White remarked that 'the rejection of Common Sense (by unionists), therefore, was seen by the UDA as a signal for them to continue to do what they did best, and let others worry about politics.'[112] And Combat stated that: 'If the UDA fails now after playing their big card, the loyalist paramilitaries have only one card left – the UFF, who will then be unrestrained by any considerations for their political wing.'[113] The electoral failures meant that future such projects were going to be even less likely.

The failure of the UDP to win any seats in the Assembly and therefore its failure to win a stake in the new political dispensation was enough to undermine its credibility as the spokesperson for the UDA, which was sidelined from the peace process.[114] Perhaps its ultimate disbandment was inevitable.

[112] White, A., 'The Development of Working-Class Loyalist Conflict (1985-95) and the Rise of the PUP and the UDP', MA dissertation, Queen's University, Belfast, 1995, p. 54.

## The UVF

The creation of the Ulster Loyalist Front in the Autumn of 1973, was, according to Garland a reflection of the knowledge of 'the weakness of right-wing Unionism' and that they 'were developing confidence in their own philosophy.'[115] As noted above, the ULF's declared aim was to

> 'express the views and opinions of grassroots Loyalists' and to 'act as a ginger group ... Its policies included a 'return to democracy' and increased use of referenda, workers' partnership schemes, and although in favour of private enterprise it wanted to curb 'international monopoly capitalism'. Better services for the old, the very young, the sick and disabled were called for, as well as changes in housing allocation and in educational structures.'[116]

The UVF was also becoming more aware that not only were the 'politicians' ignoring the welfare of working class loyalists but they were also devoid of any ideas as to how to bring the conflict to an end, and it was loyalists who were paying the price for this with their lives. As such the group's subsequent forays into politics were underpinned by two factors: firstly, the perception that the loyalist working classes were in need of political representation, rather than further exploitation, and secondly, the genuine desire to find

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[113] Combat quoted in op. cit. White p. 54.
[114] See O'Halloran, M., 'Fear about paramilitaries in wake of UDP's defeat', Irish Times, June 29th 1998.
[115] Op. cit. Garland p. 23.
[116] Ibid.

imaginative and novel ways through which the violence could ultimately be brought to an end. Billy Mitchell, a senior UVF member at the time, recalled:

> '.... We knew there had to be a different way, that we couldn't go on sending people out to blow up pubs or to go out and shoot people – and at the same time to see our pubs and our shops being blown up and our people shot. It didn't look as if the politicians were going to resolve it politically so we needed space. We felt if we called a ceasefire and stopped the hostilities, perhaps we could engage politically and maybe even ourselves come up with some political thoughts. We just felt that continued acts of violence weren't taking us anywhere.'[117]

At the time Mitchell, masked and dressed in black, stated the UVF's position:

> 'Whilst we were fighting the IRA, we were leaving the constitutional and the political crisis to the politicians. We woke up and realized that we'd been fighting a war for four years yet our country's been sold down the river by the politicians. We'd been leaving the political war to the politicians whereas in actual fact the politicians had been losing that war. So we called a ceasefire and went to the politicians and told them we weren't going to fight the Provos for ever.'[118]

The UVF, however, was still bereft of a political strategy of its own. As noted in chapter 8, the group, 'while welcoming the decision (to legalise it) and recognizing that there was

[117] Mitchell, 'Billy', quoted in op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 122

a need to develop a political party of its own, ... maintained that it had to remain an armed force'.[119] This would be a dual-track strategy of sorts but a very different one to that pursued by the IRA in the 1980s. The UVF would carry on with its 'war' while the political front would not be a tactical device to help defeat republicans but rather it would develop a political strategy that might facilitate an end to the violence. The front in this case would represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the UVF brought about by the domestic external environment - namely the loss of faith in unionist politicians to secure a settlement.

While this loss of faith was materialising the UWC strike had given loyalists a new found confidence in the political arena. Nelson stated that:

> 'The strike heightened their optimism; it seemed to show that ordinary working people could achieve change without the permission of politicians. Setting up their own independent political movement now seemed neither so frightening nor so fraught with risk of failure ... by the summer of 1974 there were many signs for the launching of a conciliatory, anti sectarian political wing in the UVF.'[120]

With the political vacuum left after the collapse of the executive, the organisation decided to form the Volunteer Political Party. The object was to 'get some political dialogue

[118] Ibid. p. 123
[119] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 124.
[120] Nelson, S., Ulster's Uncertain Defenders, Belfast, 1984, p. 174, cited in McKee, S., 'The Real Voice of Ulster Loyalism? The Progressive Unionist Party', M Litt Dissertation, University of Ulster, 1995, p. 5.

going' because 'people had become disenchanted with the political leadership they had been getting which was leading us nowhere.'[121]

Yet for the reasons cited above, and after the UVF's ceasefire had ended, Ken Gibson of the VPP was humiliated at the general election of 1974. The group, in an attempt to prevent further embarrassment stated that 'the general public does not support the political involvement of the UVF' and it was therefore 'fruitless to promote the Volunteer Party as a party political machine.'[122] The failure of the VPP served as a reminder of the preference of unionists and loyalists for constitutional politicians when it came to the ballot box[123] and it 'set back the drive for a working-class loyalist party for a number of years, indeed it was not for several years that a new political initiative was launched.'[124]

A recurring theme in PUP ideology has also been the 'criticism of the established Unionist leadership.'[125] It has, nevertheless, failed to break the stranglehold of the nature of unionist culture and traditions that have so militated against the utility of the loyalist political fronts. Moreover, in the current peace process the PUP has found its utility to be determined by the actions of republicans. Ervine declared in May 2002:

> 'There were times when I was prepared to defend Sinn Fein's right to be within the process and by implication, the Executive. No more! So, if I won't attempt to

[121] Op. cit. Taylor, Loyalists p. 138.
[122] Quoted in Cusack, J., and McDonald, H., UVF, Poolbeg, Dublin, 1997, p. 150.
[123] The party had also been smeared by unionist politicians who had accused it of supporting a Marxist agenda, arousing suspicion in working class loyalist communities (op. cit. McAuley and Hislop p. 177).
[124] Op. cit. McKee p. 8.
[125] Op. cit. McAuley and Hislop p. 178.

exclude, and feel strongly enough to refuse to justify the presence of Sinn Fein, then the options for our party are seriously narrowed.'[126]

## Conclusion

Chapters 7 and 8 have assessed the impact of popular support and state response on the utility of political fronts in Northern Ireland. This chapter has broadened the external environment to include other factors that the writer believes have also had an impact. It has argued that the community ethos that prevails in the Catholic community lends itself more to the development of a political front whereas the individualistic ethos of Protestantism in the province is more likely to militate against the effective use of such fronts. That is because the former ethos is more likely to lend itself to ideas of a common goal and unity of purpose whereas the individualism of Protestantism in the province is more likely to lead to differences and fragmentation. As Aughey has stated, loyalism is really about a bunch of individuals and this has lessened the chance that the two loyalists groups' political fronts could be utilised effectively.

The loyalist response to NICRA is also worthy of particular mention as a factor that affected the potential utility of the IRA's political front. Whipped up by men like Paisley, its ruthless and violent reaction to the civil rights marches was fundamental in creating a polarized environment that left little room for politics, tactical or otherwise, that would have entailed a greater role for Sinn Fein. Coupled with this was the fact that loyalist

[126] Ervine, D., 'Provos made the crap', newshound.com, website: http://www.nuzhound.com , May 7th 2002

politicians could not even give the new SDLP the time of day and this helped to hand the initiative to the IRA and thereby polarize the crisis further.

Despite this, the emergence of the SDLP was to have a direct impact on the decision whether or not to give a greater role to Sinn Fein, particularly as an electoral machine. It was the fear of defeat against the constitutional nationalist party, when the IRA had always claimed to represent the Catholic population, that helped prevent Sinn Fein from going to the ballot box until 1981. It was also the SDLP-inspired New Ireland Forum that led to the Anglo-Irish Agreement which was designed to marginalise Sinn Fein and therefore reduce its utility as an electoral tool. Conversely, John Hume's dialogue with Gerry Adams at the end of the 1980s was an attempt by the former to bring an end to IRA violence, and this would entail a greater role for Sinn Fein both at the ballot box (North and South) and through the peace process and all the hard bargaining it has entailed.

Another factor facilitating the utility of Sinn Fein as an electoral tool has been the hard work 'on the ground' by the party's activists. It has also managed to attract the votes of those with any grievance, not just those who disagree with partition, and perhaps the SDLP have assisted them in this by not paying enough attention to deprived areas. The key event, however, that really put Sinn Fein on the map as an electoral force, and that many see as the beginning of the current peace process, was Bobby Sands' by-election victory. It was his performance that prompted the IRA to utilise Sinn Fein at the ballot box as another weapon in the 'war' against the British.

There is no doubt that the United States has had an enormous impact on the role of Sinn Fein. The huge Irish-American diaspora has meant that the US has been a key battleground in the propaganda war and this has been one of the political front's key functions. The US has also been the source of resources and arms and this has helped militate against the use of Sinn Fein as a sign of moderation towards the use of violence. The 1990s, however, witnessed a policy from Washington and Clinton that was to give Sinn Fein its greatest utility yet. The granting of a visa to Adams in 1994 heralded the beginning of a process by which the US sought to persuade the British government to bring republicans in from the cold. It also represented a propaganda boost for republicans and subsequently Sinn Fein leaders have been portrayed as international statesmen to a global audience. The sponsorship and impetus that Clinton gave to the beginnings of the peace process and the subsequent Good Friday Agreement have been fundamental in bringing about an unprecedented role for the IRA's political front, whether or not it has come to represent moderation towards the use of violence.

The role of Libya has also impacted on the utility of Sinn Fein. It is important to appreciate that as Adams was trying to develop the political part of the struggle in the 1980s the arms shipments that were making their way through from Gadaffi only strengthened the argument of those that were sceptical of any politics. Thus, not only did these arms lessen the likelihood that Sinn Fein would represent moderation towards the use of violence but they also bolstered the views of those that were opposed to the increasing engagement with British structures, even if this was tactical.

In the cases of the loyalist groups 'other factors' in the domestic external environment have had the most significant impact on the utility of their political fronts of all the variables assessed in this thesis. While their pro-state ideology has been an inhibiting factor, more specifically, because the unionist population has traditionally been so 'law abiding', this has meant that any political endeavour by terrorist groups ('loyal' or not) was going to struggle to gain acceptance. Therefore, while no doubt unionist politicians used the threat of loyalist upheaval if the constitutional status of Northern Ireland was under threat, they were careful enough not to become too intimate with the loyalist groups, and so the division of labour ethos was maintained.

Nevertheless, the perception that the loyalist working classes were being manipulated by unionist politicians prompted the groups to attempt to give them more 'honest' political representation. This entailed not just speaking for this potential constituency of support but also represented attempts at providing an ultimate solution to the conflict that the 'politicians' had failed to achieve. With the former aim the law abiding nature of unionism and the division of labour ethos in unionist culture proved too much of an obstacle and so the groups were unable to convert this perceived constituency of support into votes at the ballot box. With the latter any ultimate solution would require imagination and innovation and would therefore inevitably entail some dilution of the Britishness of the province that would struggle to gain acceptance, such as the UDA's notion of negotiated independence. Besides these obstacles, being pro-state has meant that there have been a number of political alternatives to the loyalist political fronts and

those with serious political talent were more likely to realise it in the larger pro-union parties.

Finally, prospects for the loyalist political fronts, which have sought to find ultimate accommodation with their enemies and therefore have generally represented moderation towards the use of violence, have been undermined by the violence perpetrated by the two groups. When this loyalist violence has so often been a reaction to IRA violence, or to the perceived inadequacy of the British response to the IRA, then the loyalist fronts have also been at the mercy of the strategies of other agencies or groups in the domestic external environment.

# Chapter 10 - Conclusion

This thesis will conclude by dispelling any notion that political fronts represent the moderate half of a movement or that they are somehow ideologically different or separate from their terrorist organisations. Secondly, it will summarise the impact of the selected variables on the utility of political fronts in the chosen case studies. Thirdly, it will address the research questions posed in the introduction – to what extent has the perceived failure in the use of violence alone facilitated the greater use of political fronts and does the use of or the greater use of a political front represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the groups? Focusing on the republican movement, this thesis will conclude that the IRA's political front has been used as a tactical device but that it has ultimately come to represent moderation, even though it still uses the threat of violence at the time of writing. Finally, the conclusion will consider the possibilities for broadening the scope of this study. What impact, for example, have the same 'variables' had on the utility of political fronts in other cases? Do other political fronts have similar functions? What lessons can be learnt from the Northern Ireland context that could help bring about a transformation from a situation where the political front is very much part of the terrorist machinery to one where it represents a sign of moderation towards the use of violence? Conversely, if Sinn Fein does not after all represent a sign of moderation towards the use of violence then we will have seen the use of a political front as a tactical device to unprecedented levels, and an awareness of this will also be of use to governments in dealing with other cases where the true intentions of a terrorist group might be cloaked in an apparent commitment to democracy.

The idea that terrorist political fronts represent the moderate half of a movement is misleading. An assessment of the dynamics of the relationship between terrorist organisations and their political fronts shows that the former are very much in control of the latter and that any deviation from this would be unwelcome to the terrorist group. This has been true of the IRA and the loyalist groups. It was evident, for example, when the UDA 'bluntly' warned the UDP to 'cool it' in 1995 as far as engagement with the peace process was concerned.[1] Although at times it has appeared that the loyalist political fronts have a greater degree of autonomy than their republican counterpart their raison d'etre is to speak for the UDA and UVF. The UDP was dissolved in 2001 precisely because it no longer represented the views of the UDA.[2]

The control of political fronts is achieved through dual membership, particularly at leadership level. Although, again, this is less clear in the cases of the loyalist groups the relationship still exists albeit based on less formal interactions between individuals at the apex of the groups and their fronts, compared with the more formal dual membership in the case of the IRA and Sinn Fein. Political fronts are therefore very much part of the terrorist machinery and have a number of important functions that may have little or nothing to do with a more moderate approach towards the use of violence. Despite the differences between the roles of the anti-state and pro-state cases political fronts crucially provide terrorist groups with a political voice and a propaganda outlet. Sinn Fein has been utilised to great effect in this regard both at the national and international levels. The 'political voice' has also been important for the loyalist groups. The Progressive Unionist Party, for example, has let it be known

[1] Campbell, J., 'Loyalist Bosses Warn on Fast Paced Peace Process', Sunday World, January 8th 1995.
[2] See Rowan, B., 'Loyalist party 'left with little option'', BBC News, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news , November 28th, 2001.

when the UVF is losing faith in the peace process, while the current Ulster Political Research Group has endeavoured to convince the public that the UDA is 'cleaning up its act', after the internal feuding that led to the expulsion of Adair and his supporters.

While political fronts do not represent the moderate half of a movement this does not mean to say that the fronts themselves could not be utilised to represent moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the groups. Indeed, this thesis has argued that the loyalist political fronts have generally represented such moderation. It is also argued that Sinn Fein too has ultimately represented a softening of attitudes towards the use of violence. The point is that, whether or not this is the case, and whatever the roles of the political front are, the controlling influence has come from the terrorist organisations.

While political fronts are used as political voices and propaganda outlets by both the IRA and the loyalist groups it is clear that the anti-state Sinn Fein has had greater utility than the pro-state fronts. Its functions have also included vigilantism and 'community policing', organised confrontation and destabilising function, the development of 'alternative structures' (from the 1970s), its international role, its role as an electoral tool and its responsibility for maximizing the benefits of the peace process. In the loyalist cases, the utilities of their political fronts have also included their functions as electoral tools, as would-be political representatives of working class loyalism, and, like Sinn Fein, as the means through which to gain benefits from the peace process.

By comparison with Sinn Fein, the utility of the loyalist political fronts has been limited by the fact that they could not be used to create alternative structures because they supported the ones that already existed and their propaganda roles (both at home and abroad) were always going to be restricted by the fact that they have supported the status quo, and have not therefore been able to draw upon state transgressions, real or otherwise, that Sinn Fein has been able to both domestically and internationally. Being pro-state has also meant that any electoral ambitions from the loyalist groups have been thwarted by the number of other pro-union entities in the political market place. The ideology of a group, therefore, in this case whether it be pro-state or anti-state, is likely to have a direct impact on the usefulness or utility of political fronts.

Another problem that emanates from the loyalist groups' pro-state ideology as far as the utility of their political fronts is concerned is the 'law abiding' nature of Protestantism in Northern Ireland and, by extension, the division of labour ethos that exists within the Protestant culture - politics was for the politicians and if vigilante violence was necessary it could certainly not be allowed a political outlet to challenge the 'respectable' political parties. It was therefore ideology and the domestic external environment, through Protestant and unionist culture, that represented the most significant obstacles to the use of loyalist political fronts, especially when that use, usually as a sign of moderation, meant engagement with the electoral process.

Paradoxically, it was the changing nature of the relationship with unionism that prompted the loyalist groups to utilise political fronts in the first place. Frustration with being 'manipulated' by hardline politicians, who would use the muscle of the loyalist paramilitaries when it suited them and then drop them like a hot potato when

it didn't,[3] prompted the UDA and the UVF, especially after the UWC strike, to think more politically for themselves and they sought to give the loyalist working class 'honest' representation. These exploits, for the ideological and cultural reasons above, were destined to fail.

The ideology of the IRA has been something of a double-edged sword as far as the utility of its political front is concerned. Historically, it's powerful dogma has been accompanied by an uncompromising physical force tradition and a belief that politics was the 'domain of the unprincipled'. Traditionally, abstention from the Westminster, Dublin and Stormont administrations has gone hand in hand with an apparent indifference to the opinion of the public, which had been 'led astray'. These strong currents in republican tradition would have militated against any political involvement or engagement with British political structures and therefore limited the utility of Sinn Fein in this regard.

Yet, before going on to argue that the IRA has in fact been more pragmatic than its dogma suggests, its powerful and uncompromising ideology has, paradoxically, also helped bring about the more effective use of its political front. It has facilitated a disciplined and highly centralised organisational structure, ensuring that any political front would be under the tight control of the Army Council. This has been achieved through dual membership between the two, especially at leadership level, and it has meant that, rather than as an alternative to the armed struggle, for most of its life Sinn Fein has been a sub-unit of the IRA and an extra weapon in its struggle to rid the British from the island.

[3] Using what David Ervine called deniable plausibility, interview.

The IRA has indeed shown a degree of pragmatism despite its uncompromising dogma. This is partly due to that other component of its ideology – republican socialism - which entailed greater identification with the working classes and political exploits that reflected this, such as Peader O'Donnell's Saor Eire and Republican Congress projects in the 1930s. The traditional faultline in Irish republicanism, therefore, was between those that wanted to take a more Marxist, political path and those militarists who had no time for politics. It should not be forgotten, however, that those who may have had little interest in republican socialism often saw opportunities through it for mobilising support for the national cause – for ultimately, and this is a central argument of this thesis, it was the desire to generate popular support that lay behind first the adoption of, and then the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein, despite the IRA's apparent traditional indifference to public opinion. Indeed, Gerry Adams' political strategy and his strenuous efforts to mobilise political support both in the North and South has led to a new faultline within the movement between his supporters and those that are opposed to the increasing engagement with British structures that the peace process has entailed. Thus, IRA ideology, the group's pragmatism and dilution of this ideology, and the faultlines within the organisation have all had implications for the utility of Sinn Fein.

The structures and leadership of the groups, it is argued, which have at least been partly determined by their ideology, have also had a bearing on the utility of their political fronts. As noted above, the much more centralised and disciplined nature of the IRA meant that the political front could be kept under the tight control of the Army Council and so Sinn Fein could be utilised with a clear strategy in mind that

would be accepted by the organisation as a whole. In this respect the same could be said for the UVF which has been more centralised than the UDA. The fragmented and decentralised nature of the latter, however, has meant that its political fronts have often not been able to represent the views of the whole organisation, leading to disagreements over their utility (which, for example, eventually led to the dissolution of the UDP in 2001.)

Of fundamental importance in the 'internal environment' was the change in IRA leadership in the mid 1970s that brought Adams and McGuinness to the apex of the group. It was Adams who was instrumental in bringing about the 'Long War' strategy that entailed the greater utility of the IRA's political front, it was he that emphasised the importance of the political strategy in the 1980s and it is he that has been at the forefront of the political negotiations that continue to meet more and more of the demands of republicans. Whether or not Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation in the use of violence on the part of the IRA, without Adams at the helm it is unlikely that its political front would have been utilised to this degree.

Beyond the ideology, structure and leadership of the case studies the second 'internal' variable assessed for its impact on the utility of political fronts was the notion that violence had or has become a habit. Chapter 6 argued that, while there may be a number of strategic or ideological reasons for the persistence of violence, the idea that violence can become habitual, both at the individual and organisational levels, should not be overlooked. Certainly, at the individual level it appears that the use of violence to some has become habitual through the sharp rise in punishment beatings in the post-ceasefire period. In the case of the IRA such activity appears to some extent to

satisfy individual needs while at the same time it has been permitted in order to keep the organisation united. While in one sense this may have increased the utility of its political front by providing former terrorists with traditional Sinn Fein activities (punishment beatings and street violence) as a substitute, it has done little to enhance the electoral prospects of the party at the national level. Thus, as Sinn Fein bids to become an all-Ireland electoral force 'violence as a habit' has had a detrimental impact on its prospects.

In the cases of the loyalist groups violence as a habit has certainly had a negative impact on the utility of their political fronts. In the face of a law-abiding Protestant community, and when their political fronts have depended on the support of the wider unionist population, their organised criminal empires, punishment beatings and murders of innocent Catholics have militated against their utility both as electoral forces and as the source of ideas.

The state response has been fundamental in its impact on the choices that the terrorist groups have made vis a vis the use of political fronts. The long tradition of the arms length approach of the British government to the province led to the perception amongst some loyalists that Westminster was emotionally detached from Northern Ireland, and it was this that provided the backdrop to the independent Ulster idea and therefore the utility of the UDA's political fronts to sell the notion through *Common Sense* and *Beyond the Religious Divide*. It also doubtless helped to sustain the republican view that the British state's presence in the province was illegitimate which in turn provided the ideological underpinning to its 'community policing' role.

The British and Irish response to the Border Campaign, however, with the simultaneous introduction of internment without trial on both sides of the border, defeated the IRA and forced the group to reevaluate its strategy. The state's response in the early 1970s, though, through the 'rape of the falls', internment and Bloody Sunday, helped to polarize the crisis that militated against political endeavours, tactically or otherwise, from any of the cases studied here. So too did Dublin's response to the brewing crisis when it stirred up loyalist emotions and republican aspirations by warning that it 'could not stand idly by'.

In 1974 the deproscription of Sinn Fein enabled the IRA to use its political front as an extra weapon in its struggle to rid the British from the island. Indeed, after the failure of the 1975 truce and the government's 'deception' in pretending that it might withdraw from the province, Sinn Fein was to have an elevated role as Adams sought to expand the struggle on to all fronts through the so-called 'Long War' strategy. Security force successes and the debilitating truce of 1975, therefore, forced a reappraisal from the IRA leadership which entailed a more substantial role for Sinn Fein.

It was perhaps Thatcher's policy towards terrorist prisoners that indirectly and inadvertently led to the watershed as far as Sinn Fein's political role was concerned. Her refusal to grant special category status helped set in motion a series of events that was to ultimately lead to Bobby Sands' by-election victory and henceforth Sinn Fein's electoral role. The political front's subsequent success at the polls was of serious concern to Westminster and Dublin too, who feared that should Sinn Fein have become the majority nationalist party it might have prompted the IRA to raise the

threshold of violence that in turn might have risked civil war and led the group to attempt to draw the Republic into the conflict.[4]

The British and Irish governments therefore tried to curtail the utility of Sinn Fein as an electoral tool through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but they failed to make a long term impact on the political front's mandate. The media ban on the voices of terrorist groups was the last throw of a mindset that sought to marginalise the republican movement.

It was the change in attitude from the British state from the early 1990s that was to herald a much greater profile for Sinn Fein as it tried to draw republicans into an all-inclusive peace process. The legitimisation of the front that this has entailed has enabled it to present itself as the 'tough lawyer' for the Catholic community and thereby increase its support at the expense of the more moderate SDLP. The legitimacy that has been accorded to the movement through the peace process has therefore been fundamental in bringing about the front's success at the polls and therefore its greater utility as an electoral force to the Army Council. With an increased mandate, and while the threat of violence remains, the political front has also managed to negotiate a raft of concessions (such as executive positions in government, expenses and office space at Westminster, the early release of prisoners, and amnesty for on the run prisoners[5]) while IRA activity continues. Indeed, Sinn Fein's engagement with the peace process and the subsequent Good Friday Agreement has seen the growing prominence of the front to a point where it has,

[4] See Fitzgerald, G., All in a Life, An Autobiography, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p. 410.
[5] This last concession is still being negotiated.

arguably, superceded the armed struggle (and therefore the IRA itself) in terms of its role and influence within the movement.

As far as the loyalist groups are concerned one could perhaps trace the roots of their political fronts to the break-up of the monolith of unionism after O'Neill's attempts to introduce reforms in the 1960s. It was this that led to the emergence of the unionist 'right' that the loyalists groups were to become disillusioned with as their means of political representation. This and the failure of the state and unionist politicians to resolve the conflict prompted the two groups to engage in political endeavours of their own. Fears of a secret deal between the IRA and the government, however, meant that these political exploits, which represented attempts to achieve political respectability within the 'law abiding' Protestant community, were often at the mercy of reactionary loyalist violence.

Although the Anglo-Irish Agreement led to the temporary restoration of the monolith of unionism and therefore left little space for loyalist political fronts, the state's response in the 1990s through the peace process, as with Sinn Fein, raised the profile and utility of the loyalist political fronts whose roles as political spokespersons for the UDA and the UVF were vital if the loyalist ceasefires were to hold. The perception amongst unionists and loyalists, however, that the government continues to drip-feed concessions to republicans has led to a loss of faith in the peace process on the part of the loyalists and especially the UVF[6], whose political front has come under pressure as a result.

[6] As noted earlier it is questionable how political the UDA actually is and therefore how relevant the peace process is to it when its whole raison d'etre appears to have more to do with maintaining illegal fiefdoms.

It is not only the British and Irish governments that have had an impact on the utility of the groups' political fronts. The conflict in Northern Ireland has, since the Great Famine of the 1840s, always had an international dimension. While in the course of the Troubles elements of the Irish-American population helped, allegedly through organisations such as Noraid, to sustain the IRA's armed struggle which therefore helped militate against the use of a political front as a sign of moderation, the Clinton administration's role in 'bringing republicans in from the cold' was of fundamental importance. It was Washington's granting of a visa to Adams in 1994, followed by its persuasion of the British government to engage with republicans, and its subsequent support[7] for the negotiations, that was vital in sustaining the peace process that not only gave Sinn Fein greater utility, but also the PUP and UDP.

Thus, a willing incumbent in the White House was instrumental in facilitating Sinn Fein's endeavour to internationalise the conflict. This in turn enhanced its propaganda utility by providing it with greater opportunities to internationalise perceived British injustice and oppression.

There is no accounting for events and there have certainly been unforeseen episodes that have undoubtedly had a major impact on the utility of the political fronts studied in this thesis. The Ulster Workers Council strike was a watershed as it raised an awareness that working class loyalism was being 'manipulated' and some in the loyalist groups thereafter sought to give more adequate representation to this constituency. In the case of the IRA the one episode that has been described as *the* watershed when it comes to the utility of Sinn Fein (as an electoral tool) was the

[7] Through, for example, the appointment of Senator George Mitchell to chair the talks leading up to the GFA.

hunger strikes of 1981 and the subsequent election of Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. It prompted the IRA to pursue an electoral strategy that formed the bedrock to Sinn Fein's unprecedented role in the current peace process.

This thesis has also highlighted other factors of significance in the external environment that have impacted on the utility of Sinn Fein. It suggests that the community ethos that exists within the Catholic population lends itself to the more effective use of a political front, with a common goal and unity of purpose, whereas the individualistic culture of Northern Irish Protestantism would not. It has also noted the impact of the loyalist response to NICRA as a major factor behind the polarization of the crisis in the early 1970s which militated against the use of political fronts. The SDLP has also been a factor that the IRA has had to take account of when considering any electoral engagement, especially when the latter already claimed to represent the Catholic population.

The variable that has, it is argued, had the most impact on the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein, however, has been *the desire to mobilise a wider following or to tap perceived existing popular support.* Sands' by-election victory was only significant if the IRA were concerned about generating greater support from within the Catholic community. It was the recognition that the IRA needed popular support that lay behind the adoption of Sinn Fein as its political front in the first place. It was the admission that the lack of support led to the failure of the Border Campaign that prompted a reevaluation of strategy to address this. It was the acknowledgement by Adams in the mid 1970s that the IRA had lost touch with the populace that was the main motivation for the Long War strategy and it is the electoral drive, both North

and South, that reflects Adams' view that the destiny of the republican struggle lies in its ability, through Sinn Fein, to secure greater support at the ballot box in both jurisdictions. McGuinness himself said, in an about turn from traditional republican dogma, that 'republicanism always worked on the basis that it would never be successful unless it had the support of the people.'[8] Leadership, ideology, structure, state response, and events were all to varying degrees important factors that led to the greater utilisation of the IRA's political front. Ultimately, however, and despite its claim that it needs no other legitimacy other than the presence of the British in 'their country', the IRA has always been concerned with generating a wider following, even if, until 1981, it was hesitant to become electorally involved for fear of defeat.

The loyalist political fronts were created to represent working class loyalists so rather than mobilising support they represented attempts to attract a perceived constituency of support, particularly after the UWC strike of 1974, but as stated in chapter 7 the irony is that they have by and large failed to convert this perceived demand into electoral success (for the reasons outlined above and in chapter 9). Thus, as noted in chapter 7, while the 'popular support' variable was important in bringing about the perceived utility of the loyalist political fronts the evident lack of support at the polls militated against their use.

To what extent has the perceived failure in the use of violence alone led to the greater utilisation of a political front, either as a tactical device or as a sign of moderation? Certainly, the defeat of the IRA in the Border Campaign led to a reassessment of IRA strategy that entailed a shift towards politics of a Marxist nature. But Goulding was

[8] McGuinness, M., quoted in Jackson, G., 'Blair visit may be worse than useless – McGuinness', The Irish Times, March 8th 2001.

trying to take the *whole* organisation away from national unity as the main objective and into class struggle and so Sinn Fein's role as a 'front' had to be redefined. As Patterson noted, most of the educational work was being carried out inside the IRA and the whole movement was becoming politicised.[9]

A clearer example was the decision by Adams to launch a new strategy in the mid 1970s. It had been prompted by the failure of the IRA to achieve a military victory in the short term and it was this perceived failure in the use of violence that led to a more substantial role for Sinn Fein, though not as a sign of moderation. The hunger strikes gave a critical boost to the development of Adams' political strategy that he had launched with limited success in the 1970s.

It has been argued that a crucial factor behind the ceasefires of 1994, and thus behind Sinn Fein's higher profile, was that the IRA was up against it militarily.[10] Not only was it losing the intelligence war but loyalists were outkilling republicans for the first time. The IRA realised that a military victory was not possible and therefore the perceived failure of violence, even as part of a dual-track strategy, prompted the ceasefire which in turn led to a greater role for the political front both electorally and through the negotiations that led up to the GFA and after.

To what extent has the use or the greater utilisation of political fronts represented a sign of moderation towards the use of violence, if at all? Certainly in the case of the loyalist groups one could argue that they did represent a sign of moderation. Even if violence continued while these fronts were operating the VPP, the PUP, the NUPRG,

[9] Patterson, H., The Politics Of Illusion, A Political History Of The IRA, Serif, London, 1997, p. 106.
[10] See Holland, J., Hope Against History, The Ulster Conflict, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1999, Chapter 7, and Taylor, P., Provos, Bloomsbury, London, 1997 p. 311.

the ULDP and the UDP all represented, at least in part, attempts to ultimately find a solution to the conflict which their political masters in 'respectable' unionism had clearly failed to do. Therefore not only did the loyalist groups feel that the loyalist working classes had been misrepresented by unionist politicians but they also realised that for as long the latter failed to achieve a solution to the conflict it was they that were making the ultimate sacrifice. Why should they fight and die for the politicians whose job it was to sort the mess out? So the loyalist political fronts generally represented genuine attempts to view the conflict in a different way and so facilitate the emergence of some kind of solution. A possible exception to this is the current UPRG, which may be being used as the means to detract attention away from the organised criminal exploits of the UDA.[11]

In the case of the IRA, despite the elevated role for Sinn Fein through the 'Long War', the new approach did not represent a more moderate stance, either in the use of violence or in policy. In fact, the opposite was the case as the IRA's military structure was reorganised to combat informers and pressure was put on the movement's Eire Nua policy of 1972[12] in favour of a unitary Irish state – ' a far more uncompromising Republican position.'[13] Nor did the 'bullet and ballot box' strategy of the 1980s equate to a softening of attitudes. Again, the opposite seemed to be the case - 'Sinn Fein was pursuing an electoral strategy but not at the expense of the IRA ... the 'armed struggle' was to remain the cutting edge of the Republican Movement whose

[11] Although the UPRG has stressed that it represents an attempt 'to steer the UDA away from paramilitarism' and it claims that it has disbanded its youth wing (See 'Political path for loyalists?', UTV, website: http://www.u.tv/newsroom/indepth , February 23rd 2003 and 'Disband plan confirmed', The Sunday Life, March 23rd 2003).
[12] Eire Nua proposed a federal Ireland that would give unionists a regional power base.
[13] O'Brien, C. C., States Of Ireland, Anchor Press, London, 1972, p. 111.

centrality was never in doubt'[14]. This was especially the case after the perceived moral mandate of Sands' victory. As far as policy was concerned abstentionism was still firmly in place and phased withdrawal was replaced with the more hardline demand for the immediate British removal from the province.[15]

It was as this electoral strategy developed, however, that one could detect the first signs of tension within the movement when Adams called for the 'refinement' of IRA violence in order to enhance Sinn Fein's electoral prospects. In the sense that the Sinn Fein leader placed greater emphasis on avoiding civilian casualties and on the more careful timing of attacks (to tie in with electoral considerations) the political front did represent moderation of a sort towards the use of violence. But this should not be overstated because the use of violence was to remain at the heart of the struggle. Just because Adams was worried about the electoral repercussions of untimely bomb explosions it did not mean that the armed struggle was going to be diluted in favour of politics. After all, if the movement was going to have an electoral strategy, it seemed only sensible to try and maximise the success of the ballot box part of its approach without suggesting in any way that the armed struggle was less central to the cause. Indeed, to facilitate the bullet and ballot box strategy IRA violence was to become 'sharper' in what was termed by McGuinness as the 'Tactical use of the Armed Struggle' (TUAS) that was to allow Sinn Fein to campaign unhindered by 'disasters' like Enniskillen.

Despite the signing of the Good Friday Agreement the peace process has been dogged by the painfully slow progress of IRA decommissioning and more lately by

[14] Taylor, P., Provos, The IRA And Sinn Fein, Bloomsbury, London, 1997, pp. 283-4.
[15] Wichert, S., Northern Ireland Since 1945, Longman, London and New York, 1991, p. 186.

continuing IRA activity. It is still not clear whether or not the republican movement has forsaken the use of violence for good, and therefore whether or not Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the movement. The following will consider the arguments.

## Sinn Fein as a sign of moderation?

If the IRA's two acts of 'putting weapons beyond use' were tactical it would certainly be more ideologically palatable for the group. But there are three factors that might suggest that the organisation has at last committed itself to disarm and that Sinn Fein has come to represent moderation on the part of the movement. The Colombian episode was certainly important for two reasons. Firstly, Americans were furious that the IRA was allegedly training members of FARC, the largest of the drug trafficking organisations that Washington was countering with its 1.6 billion dollar 'Plan Colombia' operation. Ruddock quotes the special American envoy to Northern Ireland, Richard Haass, as saying to Gerry Adams: 'If any American, service personnel or civilian, is killed in Colombia by the technology the IRA supplied then you can fuck off.'[16]

Secondly, it was a debacle that was apparently organised by the hardline Brian Keenan.[17] It is claimed that his influence on the Army Council suffered an embarassing setback and changed the internal dynamics of the body, with a shift towards key Sinn Fein figures who favoured putting weapons beyond use.

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[16] Hass, R., quoted in: Ruddock,, A., 'How America held the IRA over a barrel', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , October 28th 2001.
[17] See Ruddock, A., 'How America held the IRA over a barrel', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , October 28th 2001 and Clarke, L., 'IRA 'given drug cash' to train guerrillas', The Times, October 7th, 2001.

The second factor, the September 11th 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, also seemed to be important in the apparent shift of the internal balance of the IRA Army Council. Haass, in a more restrained tone, stated that:

> 'What September 11th did was bring about a sea-change in American thinking. There is simply zero tolerance in this country for terrorism of any sort anywhere. When the leaders of Sinn Fein and the IRA saw this, and saw their traditional sources of support in the US would very likely be affected[18] I think that, in turn, caused them to reconsider their own long standing policy.'[19]

Certainly the American and British administrations could hardly declare a 'war on terrorism' if they were seen to be equivocating over Sinn Fein's right to be in government while the IRA retained its illegal weapons and terrorist infrastructure. The Colombian episode and September 11th were clearly fundamental in forcing a move from the IRA in the short term.

The third factor that has not been as widely acknowledged has been the process of receding American tolerance for the IRA, which began when Bill Clinton left office. The indications were that President Bush was not going to become as involved in the peace process as his predecessor, and when he called on the IRA to disarm[20] the republican movement must have known that it had got all that it was going to get from

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[18] Including millions of dollars 'from rich Conservative Irish-Americans' (Ruddock, A., 'How America held the IRA over a barrel', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , October 28th 2001)

[19] Haass, R., quoted in Breen, S., 'Mitchell says Trimble tactics worked', Irish Times, October 29th 2001.

[20] See Macintyre, B., 'IRA must disarm, make no mistake, says Bush on eve of visit', The Times, July 18th 2001.

Washington. Any review or renegotiation of the Good Friday Agreement was at best going to bring back what was already on offer or more likely was going to give republicans a worse deal. In short, as far as White House patronage was concerned, Sinn Fein and the IRA had had its heyday with the departure of President Clinton.

It was this last factor that may have helped to prompt the IRA to at least agree a method of putting weapons beyond use after the Weston Park talks in July 2001, along with Dublin's increasing exasperation at republican intransigence and the feeling that the negotiations had got to a 'take it or leave it' stage. Ultimately, however, it was the international strategic environment, after Colombia and September 11th, that determined the timing of the move on arms. These events appear to have prompted a shift in the internal dynamics of the IRA Army Council and this brought about a change in strategy which lay behind the group's decision to 'save the peace process' and finally confirm that Sinn Fein represented moderation towards the use of violence on the part of the group.

## Or Sinn Fein Continuing as a Tactic?

At the time of writing the IRA, it is safe to assume, still has a substantial amount of explosives and weapons in its armoury. Moreover, the argument remains that 'whatever moves are made in regard to satisfying the two inspectors and General de Chastelain, it is clear the IRA is not intending to disarm fully.'[21] A Belfast academic also wrote in October 2001 'does anyone believe, or pretend, that the IRA would decommission all its weapons and disband before it had achieved the end of British

[21] Cusack, J., 'IRA clearly not going to disarm fully', Irish Times, 7th August 2001.

rule in Northern Ireland?'[22] [23] It is also yet possible that the organisation has only disposed of easily traceable or dated weaponry while it acquires more modern arms. As the Florida smuggling operation came to light some reports suggested that 'the IRA leadership was intent on re-arming with new weapons from the US before decommissioning some of its old guns.'[24]

Perhaps more ominous are the words of Brian Keenan in February 2001 - 'those who say the war is over, I don't know what they're talking about. The revolution can never be over until we have British imperialism where it belongs, in the dustbin of history.'[25] Perhaps Keenan saw his role as interlocutor with the Independent International Decommissioning Body as the means of making sure that putting weapons out of use didn't 'get out of hand'. Sean O'Callaghan has argued that Keenan would split from Adams and McGuinness if decommissioning ever happened[26] - so what is keeping him on board? Perhaps the war is not yet over after all. The newly elected Sinn Fein MP Michelle Gildernew could not bring herself to say so[27], and nor has the movement explicitly announced a *permanent* end to the use of violence.

In its statements the IRA has said that it would put its weapons beyond use in the right context - upon the 'removal of the causes of conflict'. David Ervine of the PUP

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[22] Kennedy, D., 'Any symbolic move by IRA will be worthless', Irish Times, October 17th 2001.
[23] In fact Adams has gone to some length to explain the enormous difficulties the republican movement has faced over just the single act of putting weapons beyond use. See 'Sinn Fein chiefs took 'dangerous' gamble on arms', The Times, September 29th 2001.
[24] McDonald, H., 'IRA men offhook as guncase collapses', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , January 16th 2000. See also 'IRA accused of smuggling arms while talking peace', Sunday Times, February 20th 2000.
[25] Keenan, B., quoted in Cowan, R., 'IRA chief warns of return to war if talks fail', Guardian newsunlimited, http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , February 27th 2001.
[26] O'Callaghan, S., 'A fanatic with the instincts of a hungry jackal', The Daily Telegraph, February 10th 2000.
[27] See Browne, V., 'Meetings of minds still a long way off', Irish Times, August 15th 2001.

continually pushed Sinn Fein during the summer of 2001 to explain what these causes were.[28] To find the answer loyalists need have looked no further than Sinn Fein's website which explicitly states in bold format that '**Sinn Fein seeks an end to partition which is the cause of conflict , injustice and division in Ireland.**'[29]

A Special Branch source with a number of years experience argued that there has been no shift in the role of Sinn Fein, stating that the

> 'IRA leadership is still in control of the apparatus. The Colombian episode would have had to be cleared by the Army Council – the IRA is such a disciplined organisation that it is inconceivable that it did not. '[30]

This is supported by reports that Padraig Wilson, said to be a high ranking IRA member and a close friend of Adams, has also made at least one recent trip to Colombia.[31] One is reminded of Gerry Adams' telephone call to the White House prior to the Canary Wharf bombing in February 1996 when 'he said he was hearing some very disturbing news and he would call us back'.[32] Presumably, he was at the meeting that sanctioned the bombing.

Finally, there is little doubt that IRA activity has continued since Colombia. At the time of writing (June 2003) mainstream republicans are the main line of inquiry behind the theft of sensitive security documents from the Castlereagh police complex

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[28] See Kite M., and Walker, C., Loyalist paramilitaries reject peace agreement', The Times, July 11th 2001.
[29] Sinn Fein website: http://www.sinnfein.ie
[30] Special Branch source, interview.
[31] See Garraty, S., 'IRA 'trained Farc terrorists', Irish Independent, May 15th 2002.
[32] Bew, P., and Gillespie, G., Northern Ireland, A Chronology Of The Troubles, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1999, p. 321.

while the Stormont spying scandal led to the suspension of the political institutions in October 2002. The IRA are also believed by security forces to have orchestrated nationalist riots in Belfast in the summer of 2002. A leaked working paper from the Dublin administration in December 2002 acknowledged that IRA activity was continuing[33], while a recently discovered IRA arms cache was said to be ready for use.[34] All of this has led to fears that once the point arrives where the IRA feels that it can procure no further political concessions through its political front then it may return to war.[35]

## A Shade of Grey

If Sinn Fein does not in any way represent moderation on the part of the IRA's attitude to the use of violence then we will have witnessed the use of a political front as a tactical device to an unprecedented level - to dilute the 'Britishness' of the province, to undermine British structures and weaken state security, at the same time as rearming and strengthening its own military organisation. The tentative suggestion (because it is difficult to know for sure), however, is that, even if the Colombian, Castlereagh and Stormont episodes were sanctioned by the Army Council, while it would still have grave implications for the peace process if it were known, it could still have represented part of the effort of Adams and the republican leadership to keep the mainstream movement united, by appeasing and keeping hold of those that wanted action, or well paid employment, or those that wanted to prepare for war if the peace process failed to deliver a united Ireland. For, while it is the case that the

[33] See Doherty, J., 'Trimble walkout hits talks', The Scotsman, September 20th 2002.
[34] See Lister, D., 'IRA cache contained arms 'ready for action'', The Times, March 25th 2003.
[35] See Cusack, J., 'Castlereagh worries grow after reports of IRA activity', Irish Times, April 6th 2002.

republican movement is a disciplined organisation and skilled in presenting a united front, it is reasonable to assume that some serious debating has gone on within that has required all the undoubted skill of the leadership to hold things together. It is probably unwise to see all IRA activity as a manifestation of a well thought out strategy but rather as evidence of keeping certain people and factions placated in the effort to keep the organisation united.

The notion that there has been a rift in the IRA over Adams' approach therefore deserves some attention. In the 1980s there was clearly friction within the IRA over its electoral strategy. As early as 1983 tensions existed over the amount of resources going to the political project while 'operations had fallen'.[36] Adams was apparently furious when the IRA bombed a police station near a residential area the night before the general election of that year.[37] Danny Morrison said in April 1983: 'we would like to think that the IRA would appreciate when to take an expedient holiday for a week'.[38] In 1985 internal friction led to the expulsion of four IRA members who criticised 'the low level of IRA activity in Belfast, the exclusion of tried members like themselves from the inner circle and the diversion of funds into political work.'[39] O' Bradaigh claimed that the 1986 ending of abstention from the Dail was a 'sell out of republican principles'. Thus, while it could be argued that these internal tensions were to some extent due to the calls for the 'refinement' of 'activity', they also arose over resources and sacred republican principles. It is quite possible that internal frictions may have existed simply because there were those within the IRA who opposed *any* kind of involvement with the 'corrupt and unprincipled' political domain even if it did

[36] See Clarke, L., Broadening the Battlefield, The H Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Fein, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1987, p. 218.
[37] Ibid. p. 227.
[38] Morrison, D., quoted in Bishop, P., 'A Gunman Cleans Up His Act', The Observer, April 17th 1983.
[39] Op. cit. Clarke p. 230.

not represent moderation towards the use of violence. For, to reiterate, the armed struggle was to remain central to the cause.

The very fact that Adams had to *continue* to call upon the IRA to avoid civilian casualties suggests that the rift over his electoral strategy persisted[40], underlined by one report in 1990 that by the end of the year there had been 'recurring suggestions that Sinn Fein and the IRA [were] in the grip of an internal debate'.[41] In Sharrock and Devenport's *Man of War, Man of Peace* the authors argue that there 'is clearly a range of views' in the IRA and they noted a senior policeman's view that 'I'd be more concerned if he (Adams) wasn't on the Army Council.'[42] The implication is that Adams has been a restraining influence on the IRA and that the political strategy (and therefore Sinn Fein) has in fact come to represent moderation on the part of the group. John Major also noted the organisation's internal divisions in his autobiography. Referring to the period prior to the end of the IRA's first ceasefire he stated that 'we knew the hard men were getting restive' and that 'one IRA group was not going to wait even till then [all party talks]'.[43] Moreover, 'intelligence from all sources, overt and covert, had shown that much of the Provisional movement dissented from Adams' 'unarmed' strategy, and saw the ceasefire as no more than a tactic.'[44]

Perhaps this shouldn't be surprising if one holds to Ed Moloney's analysis that the ceasefire was only sold to the IRA on the basis that it would not be permanent.[45] It

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[40] See, for example, Goodwin, S., 'Killing of civilians alienates voters, Adams warns IRA', The Independent, January 30th 1989.
[41] Millar, F., 'IRA's pointless killing of a gentle man', The Irish Times, August 14th 1990.
[42] Sharrock, D., and Devenport M., Man of War, Man of Peace, The Unauthorised Biography of Gerry Adams, Macmillan, 1998, p. 474.
[43] Major, John, John Major, The Autobiography, Harper Collins, London, 1999, pp. 485-6.
[44] Ibid. p. 488.
[45] Moloney, E., A Secret History of the IRA, Penguin, 2002, p. 469.

was also, he argues, tolerated providing there would be no decommissioning.[46] Like many other commentators[47] Moloney notes the opposition of grass roots members to the Good Friday Agreement and to the demands the peace process has been making of republicans.[48] He also wrote that as far as the IRA was concerned the renewed ceasefire 'would not be comprehensive and all-embracing' but 'operations' could be mounted 'if necessary' and so 'there would be enough leeway to calm anxious nerves in the rank and file.'[49] In addition he describes how serious rifts developed between the Army Council and the IRA executive over consultation and policy.[50]

It is in this context that one should assess continuing IRA activity and the recent find of IRA arms 'ready for action'. To reiterate, such activity should be seen as a manifestation of different views within the group and it has presumably, to some extent, been tolerated by the leadership in order to keep the organisation united. For there is a fear that the IRA will split and that defectors will join dissident groups.[51] Quite apart from the split of 1997, defections have already taken place since the signing of the agreement.[52] It is also in this context that one should view Keenan's provocative words – as an attempt to keep hardliners on board.[53] The recent

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[46] Ibid. p. 488.
[47] Such as McDonald, H., 'Grassroots IRA resist arms move', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , December 1st 2002 and Sharrock, D., 'IRA volunteers place faith in the Armalite ... not Adams', The Daily Telegraph, February 3rd 2000. Peter Taylor argues that Adams' and McGuinness' 'great, and often unrecognized, achievement is that they have brought the republican movement so far and presided over the abandonment of so many of its cardinal principles without tearing it apart.'
[48] Op. cit. Moloney p. 481.
[49] Ibid. p. 469.
[50] See ibid. pp. 468-9. This point was also made by the Irish Times ('Violence blamed on tension in Provisionals', Irish Times, March 16th 2000.)
[51] See 'IRA stance governed by fear of defections', The Irish Times, February 2000.
[52] See McDonald, H., 'Defections to rebels shake IRA', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , December 5th 1999.
[53] His audience was a republican one and it was a time when Sinn Fein and the IRA sought to prevent defections to dissident republicans (see Keenan, B., quoted in Cowan, R., 'IRA chief warns of return to war if talks fail', http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , February 27th 2001).

introduction of a hardliner to the Army Council, for example, was designed to keep him from defecting to dissident republicans.[54]

McKittrick stated that:

> '[one] view is that the continued existence of the IRA has not only been inevitable but in some respects valuable in ensuring that republicanism did not degenerate into dozens of violent shards. This was voiced by the former chief constable, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, who said: 'If we are going to have a peace delivered, then we can't have people fragmenting all over the place and engaging unilaterally in violence. They remain intact. They continue to train, recruit and carry out intelligence gathering, which in some people's eyes presents the greatest opportunities for the delivery of true, enduring, disciplined and lasting peace.' Alongside this line of thought exists, among many sections of opinion, the belief that it is unrealistic to think that all IRA activity can suddenly be switched off.'[55]

Thus, it would appear that some elements see the organisation's ceasefire as permanent, while others might see a return to war as an option if the process does not lead to their ultimate goal. Others still might disagree with the process but are staying loyal to Adams and McGuinness. According to Patterson, Keenan believed that IRA violence had stopped too soon.[56] So the suggestion here is that it is unhelpful to look at IRA intentions and activity as a single well thought out strategy, but rather they

[54] Special Branch source, interview.
[55] McKittrick, D, 'Documents that prove the IRA is still active dissolved', The Independent, 20th April 2002.
[56] Patterson, H., interview.

should be viewed as representing the different strands of opinion within the mainstream republican movement, although the Army Council itself appears to have supported the Good Friday Agreement.

There may also be another organisational factor behind continuing IRA activity. It is unfortunately the case that the use of violence and the threat of violence is the only thing that has given the paramilitaries any relevance in Northern Ireland. If the IRA was to declare a cessation of activity what of the tensions between it and rival organisations in 'the community' such as the INLA.[57] Would the 'community policing' role be ceded to others in the republican heartlands? How would it control its illegal protection rackets without recourse to violence?[58] How also would it maintain its 'social control' of communities, or deal with dissidents who criticise its strategy, or potential defectors? It has to date used violence and the threat of violence to keep potential defectors on board.[59]

These questions throw up an uncomfortable paradox. If violence has been the only thing that has given these groups any relevance, particularly at the local level, and the IRA was to cease all 'activity', then it risks becoming irrelevant, with the possibility that it would lose support to dissidents. Aughey stated that having failed to win the war, the IRA and Sinn Fein are now trying to win the argument.[60] Not only are they trying to prevail in this argument against the British government, but also against the dissident republican groups who hold firm to the ideology and traditions of Irish

[57] See McGuigan, C., 'Tensions mount in IRA/INLA turf war', The Sunday Life, December 8th 2003.
[58] The Real IRA's Joe O'Connor was shot apparently because he attempted to move in on the IRA's lucrative cigarette smuggling trade (Cusack, J., 'New ferocity of gang 'wars' outside Dublin', Irish Times, June 11th 2001)
[59] See O'Kane, M., 'IRA dissidents arm to fight', Guardian newsunlimited, website: http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland , February 4th 1999.
[60] Aughey, A., interview.

republicanism. For this reason it would seem essential that the IRA remains intact. Any act of disbandment would be viewed by many of its own members as an act of surrender, and result in defections to the Real or Continuity IRA. In the case of the IRA, organisational survival has not come about despite the conditions of the 'external environment' (ie. the peace process) but because of them (ie. the existence of dissident groups waiting to attract defectors). So while mainstream republicans, who believe that they have been right along (with not a little encouragement from the British state – see Chapter 8), are trying to get the message of a republican triumph across, disbanding their 'legitimate army' of a united Ireland would seriously undermine their pitch. It is therefore strategically vital for the long term republican project that the group is not dissolved in a hurry. As Aughey maintains 'the effective leadership of the IRA is not in the process of disbanding the organisation but are winding it down to such a degree as to make it compatible with Sinn Fein progressing'.[61]

Due to these organisational factors, then, it is possible to explain continuing IRA activity at the same time as arguing that the IRA leadership is committed to the peace process. The contention here is that Adams' political strategy through Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence – for the post-September 11th 2001 environment and the importance of the Irish American diaspora to the IRA and Sinn Fein has meant that a return to 'war' is unlikely. While the greater utilisation of Sinn Fein may not have represented moderation in the 1970s and '80s the conditions in the environment have since determined that it now does so.

[61] Ibid.

This would not have been possible, however, without the earlier development of the political front, even if this was geared to undermining the state in every possible way.

This does not mean to say that the strategic value of an intact IRA has been lost on republicans – far from it. The threat of violence that this represents has continued to give Sinn Fein extra leverage in negotiations for further concessions. In a sense rather than the TUAS, it could be argued that republican strategy has become the 'tactical use of the threat of violence'. Nor should one unquestioningly assume that the failure of the IRA to produce an unambiguous statement revealing its intentions in April 2003 was entirely due to internal divisions. Strategic considerations may well have played a part in preventing the group from 'showing its hand' too early – ie. just before an election that might have delivered a very different negotiating adversary (the Democratic Unionist Party).[62] A return to 'war', however, is unlikely for the reasons outlined above and the primacy of politics has meant that Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation towards the use of violence.

This thesis has primarily set out to do two things. Firstly, it has assessed a number of selected variables in the internal and external environments for their impact on the utility of political fronts. In the course of this it has, secondly, outlined the different utilities and roles of these fronts. As stated in the introduction, by gaining a better understanding of this sphere of terrorist group strategy it is hoped that opportunities for conflict resolution between governments and terrorist groups will ultimately be enhanced. Likewise, the importance of recognising the fact that political fronts can

[62] The DUP was expected to seriously challenge the UUP's position as the majority party of unionism but the Assembly election (originally scheduled for May 1st 2003, and then May 29th) has been postponed until such time the British and Irish governments manage to broker a deal that resurrects the political institutions.

have important utilities and functions that may have nothing to do with a more moderate attitude towards the use of violence should also be of interest to the policymaking community. For it should not be forgotten, and this thesis has set out to make this point in the case of the IRA in particular, that political fronts are very much part of the terrorist machinery. They have been important tools for the dissemination of propaganda, for internationalising perceived grievances, for generating sympathy and support and providing the political voices of terrorist groups.

As stated at the outset this project has sought to make its own modest contribution to theory building. To reiterate, whilst it does not set out to construct an over-arching general theory, its conclusions can contribute to hypothesis building through subsequent analysis of further case studies. By assessing the impact of the selected variables and by identifying the various utilities of political fronts in the Northern Ireland context it might then be possible to draw comparisons with other cases. One of the most important functions of The National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (ERNK), the political front for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)[63], for example, was to appeal to the Kurdish diaspora at all levels – politically, socially and culturally.[64] The desire to mobilise popular support and the international environment were therefore fundamental factors behind the greater utility of the ERNK, and so too, therefore, was its role as an important propaganda tool. It was particularly concerned with drawing the attention of the international community to alleged attacks by the

[63] Which has now changed its name to Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (HADEK) – see 'Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)', GlobalSecurity.org, website: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/pkk.htm .
[64] See KIC, Kurdistan Informatie Centrum, website: http://www.xs4all.nl/~kicadam/pers/2000/1/05d0300.html .

Turkish authorities on Kurdish people and institutions.[65] Therefore, as with Sinn Fein, the ERNK, has been engaged with highlighting alleged human rights abuses by the state authorities.[66]

The Basque separatist group ETA, too, has been concerned with mobilising popular support, evident in Herri Batasuna's role as an electoral tool. It has also served as a fundraising organisation for the group. One of the reasons that it was banned by the Spanish government was that its '113 'People's Taverns' raised money for ETA's terrorist activities'.[67] These same taverns apparently acted 'as recruitment centres for young people' highlighting another role for the political front in this case.[68] Batasuna has also been heavily involved in the orchestration of street violence. In July 2002 it was fined the equivalent of eleven million pounds 'for damage caused by its youth group's campaign of street violence' as part of a strategy 'to destabilise the Basque region'.[69] The similarities with Sinn Fein's strategy and role are striking and perhaps not surprising given the history of contacts between the IRA and ETA.[70]

As this thesis has concluded that Sinn Fein has ultimately come to represent moderation on the part of the IRA towards the use of violence, what lessons can be learnt that can be applied to other cases? Of particular value to the policy making community would be the identification of the factors that facilitate the transformation

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[65] See 'ERNK Statement about Ninova Refugess and CHP Apologies', MED Broadcasting Ltd., website: http://www.ib.be/med/www/020398ninova.htm .
[66] See website: http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Ethnicity/Kurdish/Organizations/ .
[67] Judge Baltasar Garzon, quoted in Sharrock, D., 'Basque political wing banned over Eta bloodshed', The Times, August 27th 2002.
[68] Ibid.
[69] 'Eta must pay £11m for damage', The Times, July 4th 2002.
[70] Batasuna representatives attended Sinn Fein's party conference of 2002. Also members of Herri Batasuna attended every Sinn Fein annual conference from 1981-5, while Sinn Fein members have been regular visitors to the Basque region of Spain (see Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, Background Brief, 'The Provisional IRA: International Contacts Outside the United States', January 1988).

of a political front from being part of the terrorist group's machinery (as its political voice, propaganda tool, street agitator, electoral tool and so on) to representing moderation towards the use of violence where it serves as the negotiator for the terrorist group in a peace process. Certainly, the right leadership is vital. The IRA case has shown the importance of a leader capable enough to both bring the group into a peace process at the same time as keeping it relatively united. The international environment has also been pivotal in bringing about moderation towards the use of violence. There can be little doubt that a third party is bound to have more influence on an insurgent group than the traditional adversary of the state in which it operates. By developing its links with Washington the republican movement managed to gain the attention of a powerful third party that was going to have more sympathy with its cause than the British government and so could be perceived (in republican eyes) as more of a neutral arbiter in the conflict. It is worth noting that ETA has recently launched a magazine called *Zutabe* with the intention of courting sympathy abroad.[71] It will be interesting to see whether ETA's attempts to internationalise its struggle will be pursued through its political front (and how difficult this will be when it has been banned) as the IRA did so successfully with Sinn Fein.

Nevertheless the 'home' state's response is also pivotal in facilitating such a transformation. Firstly, the security response in the 1990s put enough pressure on the IRA to force it to admit that a military victory was not achievable. To complement this the British government attempted to draw the IRA's political front into an all-inclusive peace process. Spain has adopted a very different policy against ETA and HB. Chapter 8 outlines a number of fundamental differences between the Northern

[71] See Tremlett, G., 'Basque Terrorists wage war of words', The Guardian, October 18th 2002.

Ireland and Basque situations that make any comparison questionable.[72] The proscription of Herri Batasuna, however, not only disenfranchises approximately 10% of the Basque electorate but also removes the possibility that the political front might ultimately provide a democratic outlet – for, finally, and perhaps most importantly, chance events have played a fundamental role in moderating the stance of the IRA towards the use of violence. September 11th 2001 has created an environment where terrorism is no longer tolerated, particularly in the United States. It is possible that, as in the case of the IRA, allowing a terrorist political front to develop might ultimately provide the political outlet for a terrorist group should the environmental conditions determine that a more moderate approach towards the use of violence be taken.

[72] It is difficult to envisage, for example, the Spanish government declaring its neutrality on the constitutional status of the region, when it forms part of mainland Spain (and when other regions in a very decentralised system might demand the same), and thus destabilise the national fabric of the country. It is therefore not easy to imagine how the Spanish government could offer more than regional autonomy.

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## Media

This thesis has drawn upon a vast array of media sources, thankfully due to the excellent resources at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, St. Andrews, the Linen Hall Library, Belfast and those found on the newshound website (http://www.nuzhound.com). They include:

An Phoblacht

BBC News

Belfast Telegraph

Blanket

Boston Globe

Boston Herald

Chicago Sun Times

Christian Science Monitor

Combat

Counterpunch

Daily Mirror

Daily Telegraph

Derry News

Derry Journal

Financial Times

Fortnight

Fort Smith Times Record

Guardian

Hampton Union

Hartford Courant

Impartial Reporter

Independent

Independent on Sunday

International Herald Tribune

Irish Echo

Irish Examiner

Irish Independent

Irish News

Irish Post

Irish Times

Irish Voice/IrishAbroad

Irish World

Lebanon Daily Star

Montreal Gazette

National Review

Newark Star Ledger

News Letter

New Orleans Times Picayune

New York Newsday

New York Times

Observer

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People

Philadelphia Inquirer

Pittsburgh Post

Portland Press Herald

Rockland Journal News

Rocky Mountain News

Romford Recorder

RTE

San Francisco Chronicle

Scotland on Sunday

Scotsman

Spectator

Sunday Business Post

Sunday Herald

Sunday Independent

Sunday Life

Sunday Telegraph

Sunday Times

Sunday Tribune

Sunday World

Taiwan News

Time Magazine

Times

Toronto Globe and Mail

Trenton Times

Tulane Hullabaloo

Ulster Herald

UTV Internet

Washington Dispatch

Washington Times

## Websites

This project has also used a proliferation of websites. Some of the most useful are listed below:

Newshound, http://www.nuzhound.com .

Guardian/Observer articles, http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/nireland .

Cain (Conflict Archive on the Internet), http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/

Economist: http://www.economist.com/archive/view.cgi

Irish History on the Web: http://wwwvms.utexas.edu/~jdana/irehist.html .

Progressive Unionist Party website: www.pup.org .

Sinn Fein website: http://sinnfein.ie/

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